

EDWARD FITZGERALD  
AND  
POSH

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JAMES BLYTH



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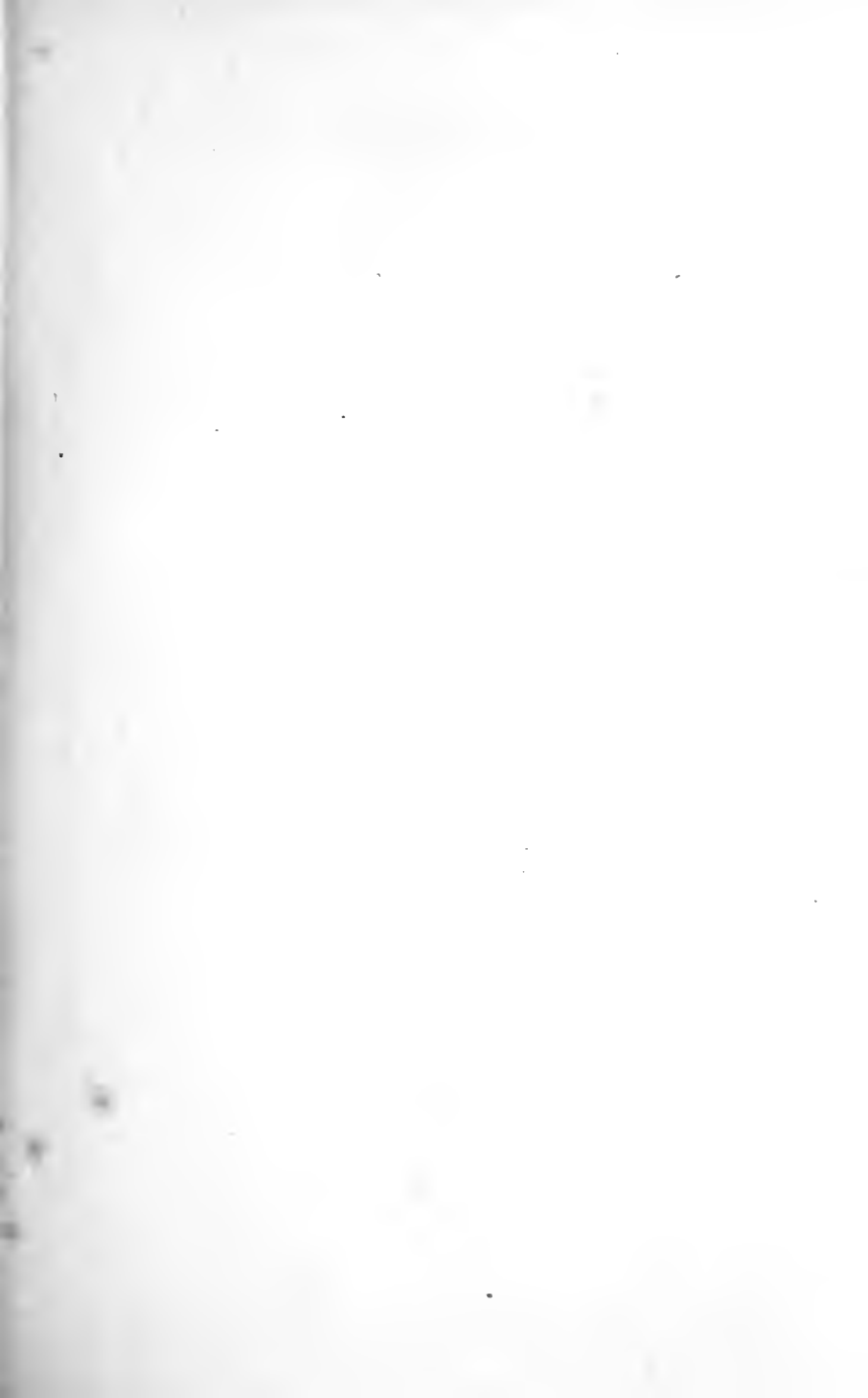




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EDWARD FITZGERALD  
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“POSH” FLETCHER IN 1870. TAKEN FOR EDWARD FITZGERALD

Frontispiece



EDWARD FITZGERALD  
AND "POSH"  
"HERRING MERCHANTS"

INCLUDING A NUMBER OF LETTERS  
FROM EDWARD FITZGERALD TO JOSEPH FLETCHER  
OR "POSH," NOT HITHERTO PUBLISHED

BY

JAMES BLYTH

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS



LONDON  
JOHN LONG  
NORRIS STREET, HAYMARKET

MCMVIII

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TO

W. ALDIS WRIGHT, Esq., M.A.

VICE-MASTER OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

I DEDICATE THIS SKETCH

WITH MOST SINCERE THANKS FOR HIS  
INVALUABLE ASSISTANCE IN CONNECTION THEREWITH

AND FOR HIS PERMISSION TO PRINT  
THE LETTERS OF EDWARD FITZGERALD  
WHICH ARE NOW PUBLISHED FOR THE FIRST TIME

JAS. BLYTH

*March*, 1908

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860215



## PREFACE

THERE can be no better foreword to this little sketch of one of the phases of Edward FitzGerald's life than the following letter, written to Thomas Carlyle in 1870, which was generously placed at my disposal by Dr. Aldis Wright while I was giving the sketch its final revision for the press. The portrait referred to in the letter is no doubt that reproduced as the photograph of 1870.

“DEAR CARLYLE,

“Your ‘Heroes’ put me up to sending you one of mine—neither Prince, Poet, or Man of Letters, but Captain of a Lowestoft Lugger, and endowed with all the Qualities of Soul and Body to make him Leader of many more men than he has under him. Being unused to sitting for his

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## PREFACE

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portrait, he looks a little sheepish—and the Man is a Lamb with Wife, Children, and dumber Animals. But when the proper time comes—abroad—at sea or on shore—then it is quite another matter. And I know no one of sounder sense, and grander Manners, in whatever Company. But I shall not say any more; for I should only set you against him; and you will see all without my telling you and not be bored. So least said soonest mended, and I make my bow once more and remain your

“Humble Reader,

“E. FG.”

Too much has been made by certain writers, with more credulity than discretion, of some personal characteristics of a great-hearted man. My purpose in tendering this sketch to the lovers of FitzGerald is to show that in many ways he has been calumniated. The man who could write the letters to his humble friend, which are here

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## PREFACE

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printed; the man who could show such consistent tenderness and delicacy of spirit to his fisherman partner, and could permit the enthusiasm of his affection to blind him to the truth, was no sulky misanthrope; but a man whose heart, whose intensely human heart, was so great as to preponderate over his magnificent intellect. Edward FitzGerald was a great poet, and a great philosopher. He was a still greater man.

Therefore, my readers, if, during the perusal of these few letters, you “in your . . . errand reach the spot”—whether it be at Woodbridge, Lowestoft, or in that supper-room in town “Where he made one”—“ . . . turn down an empty glass ” to his memory.

For there is no *Saki* to do it, either here or with the houris.

JAMES BLYTH





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## INTRODUCTION

TOWARDS the end of the summer of 1906 I received a letter from Mr. F. A. Mumby, of the *Daily Graphic*, asking me if I knew if Joseph Fletcher, the "Posh" of the "FitzGerald" letters, was still alive. All about me were veterans of eighty, ay, and ninety! hale and garrulous as any longshoreman needs be. But it had never occurred to me before that possibly the man who was Edward FitzGerald's "Image of the Mould that Man was originally cast in," the east coast fisherman for whom the great translator considered no praise to be too high, might be within easy reach.

My first discovery was that to most of the good people of Lowestoft the name of the man who had honoured the town by his preference was unknown. A solicitor

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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in good practice, a man who is by way of being an author himself, asked me (when I named FitzGerald to him) if I meant that FitzGerald who had, he believed, made a lot of money out of salt! A schoolmaster had never heard of either FitzGerald or Omar.

It was plain that the educated classes of Lowestoft could help me in my search but little. So I went down to the harbour basins and the fish wharves, and asked of "Posh" and his "governor."

Not a jolly boatman of middle age in the harbour but knew of both. "D'ye mean Joe Fletcher, master?" said one of them. "What—old Posh? Why yes! Alive an' kickin', and go a shrimpin' when the weather serve. He live up in Chapel Street. Number tew. He lodge theer."

So up I went to Chapel Street, one of those streets in the old North Town of Lowestoft which have seen better days. A wizened, bent, white-haired old lady

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## INTRODUCTION

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answered my knock, after a preliminary inspection from a third-floor window of my appearance. This, I learnt afterwards, was old Mrs. Capps, with whom Posh had lodged since the death of his wife, fourteen years previously.

“You’ll find him down at the new basin,” said the old lady. “He’s mostly there this time o’ day.”

But there was no Posh at the new basin. Half a dozen weather-beaten shrimpers (in their brown jumpers, and with the fringe of hair running beneath the chin from ear to ear—that hirsute ornament so dear to East Anglian fishermen) were lounging about the wharf, or mending the small-meshed trawl-nets wherein they draw what spoil they may from the depleted roads.

All were grizzled, most were over seventy if wrinkled skin and white hair may be taken as signs of age. And all knew Posh, and (oh! shame to the “educated

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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classes!") all remembered Edward Fitzgerald. The poet, the lovable, cultured gentleman they knew nothing of. Had they known of his incomparable paraphrase of the Persian poet, of his scholarship, his intimacy with Thackeray, Tennyson, Carlyle, the famous Thompson, Master of Trinity, they would have recked nothing at all. But they remembered FitzGerald, who has been called by their superiors an eccentric, miserly hermit. They remembered him, I say, as a man whose heart was in the right place, as a man who never turned a deaf ear to a tale of trouble.

"Ah!" said one of them. "He was a *good* gennleman, was old Fitz." (They all spoke of him as "old Fitz." They thought of him as a "mate"—as one who knew the sea and her moods, and would put up with her vagaries even as they must do. His shade in their memories was the shade of a friend, and a friend whom they respected and loved.) "That was a good day for

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## INTRODUCTION

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Posh when he come acrost him. Posh! I reckon you'll find him at Bill Harrison's if he bain't on the market."

"Posh" was no fancy name of the poet's for Joseph Fletcher, but the actual proper cognomen by which the man has been known on the coast since he was a lad. Most east coast fishermen have a nickname which supersedes their registered name, and "Posh" (or now "old Posh") was Joseph Fletcher's.

Bill Harrison's is a cosy little beerhouse in the lower North Town. It is called Bill Harrison's because Bill Harrison was once its landlord. Poor Bill has left house and life for years. But the house is still "Bill Harrison's."

Here I found Posh. At that time, little more than a year ago, I wrote of him as "a hale, stoutly-built man of over the middle height, his round, ruddy, clean-shaven face encircled by the fringe of iron-grey whiskers running round from ear to ear beneath

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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the chin. His broad shoulders were held square, his back straight, his head poised firm and alert on a splendid column of neck."

Alas! The description would fit Posh but poorly now.

"Yes," said he. "I was Mr. Fitzgerald's partner. But I can't stop to mardle along o' ye now. I'll meet ye when an' where ye like."

I made an appointment with him, which he failed to keep. Then another. Then another, and another. I lay wait for him in likely places. I stalked him. I caught stray glimpses of him in various haunts. But he always evaded me.

I think old Mrs. Capps got tired of leaning her head out of the third-floor window of No. 2 Chapel Street, and seeing me waiting patiently on the doorstep expectant of Posh.

At length I cornered him (from information received) fairly and squarely at the



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## INTRODUCTION

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Magdala House, a beerhouse in Duke's Head Street, two minutes' walk from his lodgings.

I got him on his legs and took him down Rant Score to Bill Harrison's.

"Now look here," said I. "What's the matter? You've made appointment after appointment, and kept none of them. Why don't you wish to see me?"

Posh shuffled his feet on the sanded bricks. He drank from the measure of "mild beer" (twopenny), for which he will call in preference to any other liquid.

"Tha'ss like this here, master," said he. "I ha' had enow o' folks a comin' here an' pickin' my brains and runnin' off wi' my letters and never givin' me so much as a sixpence."

"Oho!" I thought. "That's where the rub is."

I gave him a trifling guarantee of good faith, and his face brightened up. Gradually I overcame his reserve, and gradually I

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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persuaded him that I did not seek to rob him of anything. I'm a bit of a sailor myself, and I think a little talk of winds, shoals, seas, and landmarks did more than the trifling guarantee of good faith to establish friendly relations with the old fellow.

But he made no secret of his grievance, and I tell the tale as he told it, without vouching for its accuracy, but confident that he believed that he was telling me the truth. And, if he was, the man referred to in his story, the man who robbed him to all intents and purposes, is hereby invited to do something to purge his offence by coming forward and "behaving like a gennleman"—upon which I will answer for it that all will be forgiven and forgotten by Posh.

"Ye see, master," said Posh, "that was a Mr. Earle" (I don't know if that is the correct way of spelling the name, because Posh is no great authority on spelling;

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## INTRODUCTION

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but that's how he pronounced it) "come here, that'll be six or seven year ago, and he axed me about the guv'nor, and for me to show him any letters I had. He took a score or so away wi'm, and he took my phootoo and I told him a sight o' things, thinkin' he was a gennleman. Well, he axed me round to Marine Parade, where he was a stayin' with his lady, and he give me one drink o' whisky. And that's all I see of him. He was off with the letters and all, and never gave me a farden for what he had or what he l'arnt off o' me. I heerd arterwards as the letters was sold by auction for thutty pound. I see it in the paper. If he'd ha' sent me five pound I'd ha' been content. But he niver give me nothin' but that one drink. And ye see, master, *I didn't know as yew wern't one o' the same breed!*"

I have endeavoured to trace these letters, and to identify this Mr. Earle. Mr. Clement Shorter has been kind enough to do his

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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best to help me. No record can be found. And to clinch matters, Dr. Aldis Wright (whom I cannot thank enough for all his kindness to me in connection with this volume) tells me that he has never been able to find out where the letters are or who has them. One thing is certain: the person who took advantage of Posh's ignorance will not be able to publish his ill-gotten gains in England so long as any copyright exists in the letters. For no letter of FitzGerald's can be published without the consent of Dr. Aldis Wright, and he is not the man to permit capital to be made out of sharp practice with his consent. I have heard rumours of certain letters to Posh being published in America, with a photograph of Posh and Posh's "shud." They may have been published under the impression that they were properly in the possession of the person holding them. I know nothing of that, nor of what letters they are, nor who

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## INTRODUCTION

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published them, nor when and where they were issued. But I do know what Posh has told me, and if the volume (if there is one) was published in America by one innocent of trickery, here is his chance to come forward and explain.

I was glad to see that Posh no longer numbered me among "that breed." But I was no longer surprised at the difficulty I had experienced in getting to close quarters with the man. From that time on he was the plain-speaking, independent, humorous, rough man that he is naturally. He has his faults. FitzGerald indicates one in several of his letters. He is inclined to that East Anglian characteristic akin to Boer "slimness," and it is easy enough to understand that the breach between him and his "guv'nor" was inevitable. The marvel is that the partnership lasted as long as it did, and that that refined, honourable gentleman (and I doubt if any one was ever quite so perfect a gentleman as Edward

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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FitzGerald) was as infatuated with the breezy stalwart comeliness of the man as his letters prove him to have been.

As all students of FitzGerald's letters know, the association between FitzGerald and Posh ended in a separation that was very nearly a quarrel, if a man like FitzGerald can be said to quarrel with a man like Posh. But Posh never says a word against his old gov'nor's generosity and kindness of heart. He puts his point of view with emphasis, but always maintains that had it not been for other "interfarin' parties" there would never have been any unpleasantness between him and the great man who loved him so well, and whom, I believe in all sincerity, he still loves as a kind, upright, and noble-hearted gentleman.

And as Posh's years draw to a close (he was born in June, 1838) I think his thoughts must often hark back to the days when he was all in all to his gov'nor. For

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## INTRODUCTION

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evil times have come on the old fellow. He is no longer the hale, stalwart man I first saw at Bill Harrison's.

A little before the Christmas of 1906 he was laid up with a severe cold. But he was getting over that well, when, one Sunday, a broken man, almost decrepit, came stumbling to my cottage door.

"The pore old lady ha' gorn," he said. "She ha' gorn fust arter all. Pore old dare. She had a strook the night afore last, and was dead afore mornin'."

Into the circumstances of his old landlady's death, of the action of her legal personal representatives, I will not go here. It suffices to say that Posh and the other lodgers in the house were given two days to "clear out" and that I discovered that the old fellow had been sleeping in his shed on the beach for two nights, without a roof which he could call his home. Thanks to certain readers of the *Daily Graphic* and to the members of the Omar

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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Khayyám Club, I had a fund in hand for Posh's benefit, and immediately put a stop to his homelessness. Indeed, he knew of this fund, and that he could draw on it at need when he chose. But I believe the old man's heart was broken. He has never been the same man since. The last year has put more than ten years on the looks and bearing of the Posh whom I met first. But his memory is still good, and I was surprised to see how much he remembered of the people mentioned in the letters published in this volume when I read them through to him the other day.

He cannot understand how it is that these letters have any value. He tells me he has torn up "sackfuls on 'em" and strewn them to the winds. The actual letters have been sold for his benefit, and I think that FitzGerald would be pleased if he knew (as possibly he does know) that his letters to his fisherman friend have proved a stay to his old age.





POSH IN 1907

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## INTRODUCTION

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I have done my best to give approximate dates to the letters, and where I have succeeded in being absolutely correct I have to thank Dr. Aldis Wright, whose courtesy and kindness, the courtesy and kindness from a veteran to a tyro which is so encouraging to the tyro, have been beyond any expression of thanks which I can phrase. I hope that the letters and notes may help to make a side of FitzGerald, the simple human manly side, better known, and to enable my readers to judge his memory from the point of view of those old shrimpers by the new basin as a "*good* gennleman," as a noble-hearted, courageous man, as well as the more artificial scholar who quotes Attic scholiasts in a playful way as though they were school classics. Every new discovery of FitzGerald's life seems to create new wonder, new admiration for him; and there are, I hope, few who will read without some emotion not far

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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from tears the sentence in his sermon to Posh.

"Do not let a poor, old, solitary, and sad Man (as I really am, in spite of my Jokes), do not, I say, let me waste my Anxiety in vain. I thought I had done with new Likings: and I had a more easy Life perhaps on that account: *now* I shall often think of you with uneasiness, for the very reason that I had so much Liking and Interest for you."

# EDWARD FITZGERALD AND "POSH"

## CHAPTER I

### THE MEETING

THE biography of a hero written by his valet would be interesting, and, according to proverbial wisdom, unbiased by the heroic repute of its subject. But it would be artificial for all that. Even though the hero be no hero to his valet, the valet is fully aware of his master's fame; indeed, the man will be so inconsistent as to pride himself, and take pleasure in, those qualities of his master, the existence of which he would be the first to deny.

Where, however, a literary genius condescends to an intimacy with a simple son of sea and shore who is not only practi-

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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cally illiterate but is entirely ignorant of his patron's prowess, the opinions of the illiterate concerning the personal characteristics of the genius obtain a very remarkable value as being honest criticism by man of man, uninfluenced by the spirit either of disingenuous adulation or of equally disingenuous depreciation. That these opinions are in the eyes of a disciple of the great man quaint, almost insolently crude is a matter of course. But when they tend to show the master not only great in letters but great in heart, soul, human kindness, and generosity, they form, perhaps, the most notable tribute to a great personality.

With the exception of Charles Lamb, no man's letters have endeared his memory to so many readers as have the letters of Edward FitzGerald. But FitzGerald's friends (to whom most of the letters hitherto published were addressed) were cultured gentlemen, men of the first rank of the time, of the first rank of all time,



COTTAGE AT CORNER OF BOULGE PARK, WHERE FITZGERALD LIVED FOR MANY YEARS

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## THE MEETING

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men who would necessarily be swayed by the charm of his culture, by the delicacy of his wit, by the refinement of his thoughts.

In the case of "Posh," however (that typical Lowestoft fisherman who supplied "Fitz" with a period of exaltation which was as extraordinary as it was self-revealing), there were no extraneous influences at work. Posh knew the man as a good-hearted friend, a man of jealous affection, as a free-handed business partner, as a lover of the sea. He neither knew nor cared that his partner (he would not admit that "patron" would be the better word!) was the author of undying verse. To this day it is impossible to make him understand that reminiscences of FitzGerald are of greater public interest than any recollection of him—Posh.

It was not easy to explain to him that it was his first meeting with Edward FitzGerald that was the thing and not the theft of his (Posh's) father's longshore lugger

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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which led to that meeting. However, time and patience have rendered it possible to separate the wheat from the tares of his narrative; and what tares may be left may be swallowed down with the more nutritious grain without any deleterious effect.

In the early summer of 1865 some daring longshore pirate made off with Fletcher senior's "punt," or longshore lugger, without saying as much as "by your leave." The piracy (as was proper to such a deed of darkness) was effected by night, and on the following morning the coastguard were warned of the act. These worthy fellows (and they are too fine a lot of men to be disbanded by any twopenny Radical Government) traced the boat to Harwich. Here the gallant rover had sought local and expert aid to enable him to bring up, had then raised an awning, as though he were to sleep aboard, and, after thus satisfying the local talent to whom he was still in-

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## THE MEETING

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debted for their services, had slunk ashore and disappeared. Old Mr. Fletcher, on hearing the news, started off to Harwich in another craft of his, and (fateful fact!) took his son Posh with him.

Both the Fletchers were known to Tom Newson, a pilot of Felixstowe Ferry, and they naturally looked him up.

For years Edward FitzGerald had been accustomed to cruise about the Deben and down the river to Harwich in a small craft captained by one West. But in 1865 he was the owner of a smart fifteen-ton schooner, which he had had built for him by Harvey, of Wyvenhoe, two years previously, and of which Tom Newson was the skipper and his nephew Jack the crew. According to Posh, the original name of this schooner was the *Shamrock*, but she has become famous as the *Scandal*. It happened that when the Fletchers were at Harwich in search of the stolen punt, Edward FitzGerald had come down the

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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river, and Newson made his two Lowestoft friends known to his master.

There can be no doubt that at that time, when he was twenty-seven years of age, Posh was an exceptionally comely and stalwart man. And he was, doubtless, possessed of the dry humour and the spirit of simple jollity which make his race such charming companions for a time. At all events his personality magnetised the poet, then a man of fifty-six, already a trifle weary of the inanities of life.

FitzGerald must have been tolerably conversant with the Harwich and Felixstowe mariners—with the "salwagers" of the "Ship-wash"—and the characters of the pilots and fishermen of the east coast. But Posh seems to have come to him as something new. How it happened it is impossible to guess. Posh has no idea. He has a more or less contemptuous appreciation of FitzGerald's great affection for him. But he cannot help any one to

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## THE MEETING

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get to the root of the question why FitzGerald should have singled him out and set him above all other living men, as, for a brief period of exaltation, he certainly did.

From the first meeting to the inevitable disillusionment FitzGerald delighted in the company of the illiterate fisherman. Whether he took his protégé cruising with him on the *Scandal*, or sat with him in his favourite corner of the kitchen of the old Suffolk Inn at Lowestoft, or played "all-fours" with him, or sat and "mardled" with him and his wife in the little cottage (8 Strand Cottages, Lowestoft) where Posh reared his brood, FitzGerald was fond even to jealousy of his new friend. The least disrespect shown to Posh by any one less appreciative of his merits FitzGerald would treat as an insult personal to himself. On one occasion when he was walking with Posh on the pier some stranger hazarded a casual word or two

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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to the fisherman. "Mr. Fletcher is *my* guest," said FitzGerald at once, and drew away his "guest" by the arm.

It must have been soon after their first meeting that FitzGerald wrote to Fletcher senior, Posh's father :—

"MARKETHILL, WOODBRIDGE,  
"March 1.

"MR. FLETCHER,

"Your little boy Posh came here yesterday, and is going to-morrow with Newson to Felixtow Ferry, for a day or two.

"In case he is wanted at Lowestoft to attend a *Summons*, or for any other purpose, please to write him a line, directing to him at

"Thomas Newson's,

"Pilot,

"Felixtow Ferry,

"*Ipswich.*

"Yours truly,

"EDWARD FITZGERALD."



11 MARKET HILL, WOODBRIDGE (SHOWING TABLET OUTSIDE  
FITZGERALD'S OLD ROOMS)

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## THE MEETING

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At this time Posh was earning his living as the proprietor of a longshore "punt," or beach lugger. In those days there were good catches of fish to be made inshore, and it was not unusual for a good day's long-lining (for cod, haddock, etc.) to bring in seven or eight pounds. Shrimps and soles fell victims to the longshoremen's trawls, and altogether there were a hundred fish to be caught to one in these days. Moreover, before steam made coast traffic independent of wind, the sand-banks outside the roads were a great source of profit to the beach men, who went off in their long yawls to such craft as "missed stays" coming through a "gat," or managed to run aground on one of the sand-banks in some way or other. The methods of the beach men were sometimes rather questionable, and Colonel Leathes, of Herringfleet Hall, tells a tale of a French brig, named the *Confiance en Dieu*, which took the ground on the Newcome Sand off Lowes-

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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toft about the year 1850. The weather was perfectly calm, but a company of beach men boarded her and got her off, and so established a claim for salvage. As a result she was kept nine weeks in port, and her skipper, the owner, had to pay £1200 to get clear.

All things considered, it is probable that a Lowestoft longshoreman, in the sixties and seventies of the nineteenth century, could make a very good living of it, and even now, now when poverty has fallen on the beach, no beach man, unspoilt by the curse of visitors' tips, would bow his head to any man as his superior.

FitzGerald always took a humorous delight in the business of "salwaging" (as the men call it), and in his *Sea Words and Phrases along the Suffolk Coast* (No. II), he defines "Rattlin' Sam" as follows: "A term of endearment, I suppose, used by Salvagers for a nasty shoal off the Corton coast." In the same publication (I) he





12 MARINE TERRACE, LOWESTOFT

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## THE MEETING

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defines "saltwagin." "So pronounced (if not *solkwagin'*) from, perhaps, an indistinct implication of *salt* (water) and *wages*. *Salvaging*, of course."

Posh tells how his "guv'nor" would clap him on the back and laugh heartily over a "salwagin'" story. "You sea pirates!" he would say. "You sea pirates!"

In the spring of 1866 FitzGerald stayed at 12 Marine Terrace, Lowestoft, in March and April, and passed most of his time with Posh. In the evenings he would sit and smoke a pipe, or play "all-fours." In the day he liked to go to sea with Posh in the latter's punt, the *Little Wonder*. The *Scandal* was not launched that year till June, and although he "got perished with the N.E. wind" (*Two Suffolk Friends*, p. 101), he revelled in the rough work.

He must have been a quaint spectacle to the Lowestoft fishermen, for Posh assures me that he always went to sea in a silk

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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hat, and generally wore a "cross-over," or a lady's boa, round his neck.

Now a silk hat and a lady's boa aboard a longshore punt would be about as incongruous as a court suit in a shooting field. But FitzGerald was not vain enough to be self-conscious. He knew when he was comfortable, and that was enough for his healthy intelligence. Why should he care for the foolish trifles of convention? So to sea he went, top hat and all. And a good and hardy sailor man he was, as all who remember his ways afloat will testify.

Shortly before or after his visit to Lowestoft in the spring of 1866 FitzGerald wrote to Posh:—

"MARKETHILL, WOODBRIDGE,  
"Saturday.

"MY GOOD FELLOW,

"When I came in from my Boat yesterday I found your Hamper of Fish. Mr. Manby has his conger Eel: I gave the

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## THE MEETING

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Codling to a young Gentleman in his ninetieth year: the Plaice we have eaten here—very good—and the Skaite I have just sent in my Boat to Newson. I should have gone down myself, but that it set in for rain; but, at the same time, I did not wish to let the Fish miss his mark. Newson was here two days ago, well and jolly; his Smack had a good Thing on the Ship-wash lately; and altogether they have done pretty well this Winter. He is about beginning to paint my Great Ship.

“I had your letter about Nets and Dan. You must not pretend you can’t write as good a Letter as a man needs to write, or to read. I suppose the Nets were cheap if good; and I should be sorry you had not bought more, but that, when you have got a Fleet for alongshore fishing, then you will forsake them for some Lugger; and then I shall have to find another Posh to dabble about, and smoke a pipe, with. George

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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Howe's Schooner ran down the Slips into the Water yesterday, just as I was in time to see her Masts slipping along. In the Evening she bent a new Main-sail. I doubt she will turn out a dear Bargain, after all, as such Bargains are sure to.

"I was looking at the Whaleboat I told you of, but Mr. Manby thinks she would . . . you propose.

"Here is a long Yarn ; but to-morrow is Sunday ; so you can take it easy. And so 'Fare ye well.'

"EDWARD FITZGERALD."

The boat referred to in this letter was probably a small craft in which FitzGerald had been in the habit of cruising up and down river with one "West." It certainly was not the *Scandal*, for as transpires in the letter, that "Great Ship" was not yet painted for the yachting season.

Mr. Manby was a ship agent at Woodbridge.







OLD LOWESTOFT HERRING-DRIFTER WITH "DAN" FIXED TO STEM

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## THE MEETING

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The "Ship-wash" was, and is, the "Rattlin' Sam" of Felixstowe, and Tom Newson, FitzGerald's skipper, had evidently had a good bit of "salwagin'."

"Dan" is not the name of a man, but of a pointed buoy with a flag atop wherewith herring fishers mark the end of their fleets of nets, or (vide *Sea Words and Phrases*, etc.). "A small buoy, with some ensign atop, to mark where the fishing lines have been shot; and the *dan* is said to 'watch well' if it hold erect against wind and tide. I have often mistaken it for some floating sea bird of an unknown species."

The prophecy that as soon as Posh got his longshore fleet complete he would wish to go on a "lugger," that is to say, to the deep-sea fishing, was destined to be fulfilled, and that with the assistance of FitzGerald himself. But no one ever took Posh's place. FitzGerald's experience as a "herring merchant" began and ended with his intimacy with Posh.

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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George Howe, whose schooner was launched so that FitzGerald was just in time to see her masts slipping along, was one of the sons of "old John Howe," who, with his wife, was caretaker of Little Grange for many years. The schooner was, Posh tells me, exceptionally cheap, and FitzGerald's reference to her meant that she was too cheap to be good.

Since Posh's letter-writing powers received praise from one so qualified to bestow it, there must have been a falling off from want of practice, or from some other cause, for the old man is readier with his cod lines than with his pen by a very great deal, and it is difficult to believe that he ever wielded the pen of a ready writer. But perhaps FitzGerald was so fascinated by the qualities which did exist in his protégé that he saw his friend through the medium of a glamour which set up, as it were, a mirage of things that were not. Well, it speaks better for a man's heart to descry

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## THE MEETING

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non-existent merits than to imagine vain defects, and it was like the generous soul of FitzGerald to attribute excellencies to his friend which only existed in his imagination.

## CHAPTER II

### “REMEMBER YOUR DEBTS”

IN 1866 Posh became the owner of a very old deep-sea lugger named the *William Tell*, and, to enable him to acquire the nets and gear necessary for her complete equipment as a North Sea herring boat, he borrowed a sum of £50 from Tom Newson, and a further sum of £50 from Edward FitzGerald. FitzGerald thought that Newson should have security for his loan (vide *Two Suffolk Friends*, p. 104), but Newson refused to accept any such thing. He, too, seems to have been under the influence of Posh's fascination. On October 7th, 1866, FitzGerald wrote (*Two Suffolk Friends*, p. 105): “I am amused to see Newson's devotion to his young Friend. . . . He declined having any Bill of Sale on Posh's

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## “REMEMBER YOUR DEBTS”

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Goods for Money lent; old as he is (enough to distrust all Mankind) . . . has perfect reliance on his Honour, Industry, Skill and Luck.”

About this time FitzGerald must have written the following fragment, in which he refers to Newson’s loan :—

“You must pay him his Interest on it when you can, and then I will take the Debt from him, adding it to the £50 I lent you, and letting all that stand over for another time.

“My dear Posh, I write all this to you, knowing you are as honest a fellow as lives : but I never cease hammering into everybody’s head Remember your Debts, Remember your Debts. I have scarcely ever [known?] *any one* that was not more or less the worse for getting into Debt : which is one reason why I have scarce ever lent money to any one. I should not have lent it to *you* unless I had confidence in

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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you: and I speak to you plainly now in order that my confidence may not diminish by your forgetting *one farthing* that you owe any man.

"The other day an old Friend sent me £10, which was one half of what he said he had borrowed of me *thirty years ago!* I told him that, on my honour, I wholly forgot ever having lent him any money. I could only remember once *refusing* to lend him some. So here is *one* man who remembered his Debts better than his Creditor did.

"I will ask Newson about the Cork Jacket. You know that I proposed to give you each one: but your Mate told me that no one would wear them.

"Yesterday I lost my purse. I did not know where: but Jack had seen me slip into a Ditch at the Ferry, and there he went and found it. So is this Jack's Luck, or mine, eh, Mr. Posh?

"E. FG."



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## “REMEMBER YOUR DEBTS”

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The debt to Newson was subsequently taken over by FitzGerald, and a new arrangement made on the building of the *Meum and Tuum* in the following year. But this fragment is important, in that it strikes a note of warning, which had to be repeated again and again during the partnership between the poet and the fisherman. Posh was happy-go-lucky in his accounts. I believe he was perfectly honest in intention, but he did not understand the scrupulosity in book-keeping which his partner thought essential to any business concern.

FitzGerald himself was very far from being meticulous where debts due to him were concerned. Dr. Aldis Wright can remember more than one instance in which FitzGerald tore up an acknowledgment of a loan after two or three years' interest had been paid. “I think you've paid enough,” or “I think he's paid enough,” would be his bland dismissal of the debt due to him. Many Woodbridge people had good cause

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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to know the generosity of the man as well as ever Posh had cause to know it. Fitzgerald may not have opened his heart to his Woodbridge acquaintance so freely as he did to Posh, but he was always ready to loosen his purse-strings.

The cork jackets were afterwards supplied to the crew of the *Meum and Tuum*, as will be apparent in the letters.

"Jack," who found the purse, was Jack Newson, Tom Newson's nephew, and the "crew" of the *Scandal*.

### CHAPTER III

#### A SERMON FOR SUNDAY

IN 1867 Posh sold the old *William Tell* to be broken up. She was barely seaworthy and unfit to continue fishing. An agreement was entered into with Dan Fuller, a Lowestoft boat-builder, for a new lugger to be built, on lines supplied by Posh, at a total cost (including spars) of £360. FitzGerald had suggested that the boat should be built by a Mr. Hunt, of Aldeburgh, but Posh persuaded him to consent to Lowestoft and Dan Fuller instead. "I can look arter 'em better," said he, with some show of reason.

The agreement was, in the first instance, between Dan Fuller and Posh, but FitzGerald took a fancy to become partner with Posh in the boat and her profits. He

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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was to find the money for the new lugger, and to let the sums already due from Posh remain in the partnership, while Posh was to bring in the nets and gear he had.

But by this time FitzGerald had seen symptoms in Posh which caused him anxiety. He loved his humble friend, and his anxiety was on account of the man and not on account of the possibilities of pecuniary loss incurred through Posh's weakness. On December the 4th, 1866, he wrote to Mr. Spalding, of Woodbridge: "At eight or half-past I go to have a pipe at Posh's, if he isn't half-drunk with his Friends" (*Two Suffolk Friends*, p. 107).

On January 5th, 1867, he wrote to the same correspondent (*Two Suffolk Friends*, p. 108) referring to Posh: "This very day he signs an Agreement for a new Herring-lugger, of which he is to be Captain, and to which he will contribute some Nets and Gear. . . . I believe I have smoked my pipe every evening but one with Posh at

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## A SERMON FOR SUNDAY

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his house, which his quiet little Wife keeps tidy and pleasant. The Man is, I do think, of a Royal Nature. I have told him he is liable to one Danger (the Hare with many Friends)—so many wanting him *to drink*. He says it's quite true and that he is often obliged to run away : as I believe he does : for his House shows all Temperance and Order. This little lecture I give him—to go the way, I suppose, of all such Advice. . . .”

I fear that poor Posh's limbs soon grew too stiff to permit him to run away from the good brown “bare.” But the lecture which FitzGerald mentions so casually was surely one of the most delicately written warnings ever penned. The sterling kindness of the writer is as transparent in it as is his tenderness to an inferior's feelings. No one but a very paragon of a gentleman would have taken the trouble to write so wisely, so kindly, so tenderly, and so earnestly. The appeal must surely have

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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moved Posh, for the pathos of the reference to his patron's loneliness could not but have its effect.

But to touch on the sacred "bare" of a Lowestoft fisherman is always dangerous. There are many teetotallers among them now, and they would resent any imputation on their temperance. But those who are not teetotallers would resent it much more. FitzGerald warned his friend in as beautiful a letter as was ever written. But Posh could never regard the "mild bare," the "twopenny" of the district, as an enemy. He rarely touched spirits. Now, at the age of sixty-nine, he enjoys his mild beer more than anything and cares little for stronger stuff. But there is no doubt that this same mild beer inserted the edge of the adze which was to split the partnership in a little more than three years' time—this and the "interfarin' parties," whom Posh blames for all the misunderstandings which were to come.

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## A SERMON FOR SUNDAY

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“MARKETHILL, WOODBRIDGE, *Thursday*.

“MY DEAR POSHY,

“My Lawyer can easily manage the Assignment of the Lugger to me, leaving the Agreement as it is between you and Fuller. But you must send the Agreement here for him to see.

“As we shall provide that the Lugger when built shall belong to me; so we will provide that, in case of my dying *before* she is built, you may come on my executors for any money due.

“I think you will believe that I shall propose, and agree to, nothing which is not for your good. For surely I should not have meddled with it at all, but for that one purpose.

“And now, Poshy, I mean to read you a short Sermon, which you can keep till Sunday to read. You know I told you of *one* danger—and I do think the only one—you are liable to—*Drink*.

“I do not the least think you are *given* to

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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it: but you have, and will have, so many friends who will press you to it: perhaps *I* myself have been one. And when you keep so long without *food*; *could* you do so, Posh, without a Drink—of some your bad Beer [*sic*] too—now and then? And then, does not the Drink—and of bad Stuff—take away Appetite for the time? And will, if continued, so spoil the stomach that it will not bear anything *but* Drink. And this evil comes upon us gradually, without our knowing how it grows. That is why I warn you, Posh. If I am wrong in thinking you want my warning, you must forgive me, believing that I should not warn at all if I were not much interested in your welfare. I know that you do your best to keep out at sea, and watch on shore, for anything that will bring home something for Wife and Family. But do not do so at any such risk as I talk of.

“I say, I tell you all this for your sake: and something for my own also—not as



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## A SERMON FOR SUNDAY

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regards the Lugger—but because, thinking you, as I do, so good a Fellow, and being glad of your Company; and taking *Pleasure* in seeing you prosper; I should now be sorely vexed if you went away from what I believe you to be. Only, whether you do well or ill, *show me all above-board*, as I really think you have done; and do not let a poor old, solitary, and sad Man (as I really am, in spite of my Jokes), do not, I say, let me waste my Anxiety in vain.

“I thought I had done with new Likings: and I had a more easy Life perhaps on that account: *now* I shall often think of you with uneasiness, for the very reason that I have so much Liking and Interest for you.

“There—the Sermon is done, Posh. You *know* I am not against Good Beer while at Work: nor a cheerful Glass after work: only do not let it spoil the stomach, or the Head.

“Your’s truly,

“E. FG.”

## CHAPTER IV

### THE *MUM TUM*

FITZGERALD having made up his mind to give Posh a lift by going into partnership with him began by finding not only the money for the building of the boat but a name for her when she should be ready for sea. It seemed to him that "Meum and Tuum" would be an appropriate name, and the *Mum Tum* is remembered along the coast to this day as a queer, meaningless title for a boat. At a later date FitzGerald is reported to have said that his venture turned out all Tuum and no Meum so far as he was concerned. But it is possible that Posh dealt more fairly with him than he thought. At all events Posh thinks he did.

The boat was to be paid for in instal-

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## THE MUM TUM

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ments. So much on laying the keel, so much when the deck was on, etc., etc., and FitzGerald took the greatest interest in her building. He had first thought of christening the lugger "Marian Halcombe," after Wilkie Collins's heroine in *The Woman in White*, as appears from a letter to Frederic Tennyson, written in January, 1867 (*Letters*, II, 90, Eversley Edition):—

"I really think of having a Herring-lugger I am building named Marian Halcombe. . . . Yes, a Herring-lugger; which is to pay for the money she costs unless she goes to the Bottom: and which meanwhile amuses me to consult about with my Sea-folks. I go to Lowestoft now and then by way of salutary Change; and there smoke a Pipe every night with a delightful Chap who is to be Captain."

Again on June 17th (*Letters*, II, 94, Eversley Edition) he wrote to the late Professor Cowell of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge:—

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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"I am here in my little Ship" (the *Scandal*) "with no company but my crew" (Tom Newson and his nephew Jack) ". . . and my other—Captain of the Lugger now a-building: a Fellow I never tire of studying—If he *should* turn out knave, I shall have done with all Faith in my own Judgment: and if he should go to the Bottom of the Sea in the Lugger—I shan't cry for the Lugger."

There was some delay in getting the deck planks on the lugger, for FitzGerald wrote to Mr. Spalding on May 18th, 1867 (*Two Suffolk Friends*, p. 110), that she would be deeked "next Week," whereas her planking was not finished till June, and, on a Friday in June, FitzGerald wrote to Posh:—

"WOODBRIDGE, *Friday*.

"MY DEAR POSHY,

"I am only back To-day from London, where I had to go for two days: and I am very glad to be back. For the Weather

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## THE MUM TUM

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was wretched: the Streets all Slush: and I all alone wandering about in it. So as I was sitting at Night, in a great Room where a Crowd of People were eating Supper, and Singing going on, I thought to myself—Well, Posh might as well be here; and then I should see what a Face he would make at all this—This Thought really came into my mind.

“I had asked Mr. Berry to forward me any Letters because I thought you might write to say the Lugger was planked. But now you tell me it is no such thing: well, there is plenty of time: but I wished not to delay in sending the Money, if wanted. I have seen, and heard, no more of Newson; nor of *his* new Lugger from Mr. Hunt—I am told that one of the American yachts, *The Henrietta*, is a perfect Model: so I am going to have a Print of her that I may try and learn the Stem from the Stern of a Ship. If this North-Easter changes I daresay I may run to Lowestoft next week

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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and get a Sail, but it is too cold for that now.

"Well, here is a letter, you see, my little small Captain, in answer to yours, which I was glad to see, for as I do not forget you, as I have told you, so I am glad that you should sometime remember the Old Governor and Herring-merchant

"EDWARD FITZGERALD."

It should be observed that in this letter, as in several of those written to Posh, FitzGerald signed his name, "Edward FitzGerald," in full, a practice from which he was averse owing to certain facts connected with another Edward Fitzgerald. Those who have heard the story of the historic first meeting between the poet and the late Mr. Bernard Quaritch will remember why *our* FitzGerald disliked the idea of being confused with the other Edward Fitzgerald.

The letter here given forces a delightful picture upon us. Its simplicity makes



POSH AND HIS OLD "SHED," IN WHICH NETS, ETC., BELONGING TO THE PARTNERSHIP WERE STORED, AND WHERE THE LETTERS NOW PUBLISHED WERE FOUND

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## THE MUM TUM

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it superbly graphic. Think of FitzGerald, refined in feature and reserved in manner, a little unconventional in dress, but not sufficiently so to be vulgarly noticeable—think of the man who has given us the most poetical philosophy and the most philosophical poetry, all in the most exquisite English, in our language, sitting probably at Evans's (it sounds like Evans's with the suppers and the music) and looking a little pityingly at the reek about him like the "poor old, solitary, and sad Man as he really was in spite of his Jokes"; and then imaging in his mind's eye the handsome stalwart fisherman whom he loved so truly, and believing that he was as morally excellent as he was physically! "What a Face he would make at all this!" thought the poet.

Five or six years ago a good friend of mine, the skipper of one of the most famous tugs of Yarmouth, had to go up to town on a salvage case before the Admiralty

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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Court. With him as witnesses went one or two beach men of the old school, wind- and sun-tanned old shell-backs, with voices like a fog-horn, and that entire lack of self-consciousness which is characteristic of simplicity and good breeding. My friend the skipper was cultured in comparison with the old beach men, and he was a little vexed when one old "salwager" insisted on accompanying him to the Oxford Music Hall. All went well till some conjurers appeared on the stage. Then the skipper found that he had made a mistake in edging away from the beach man. For that jolly old salt hailed him across the house. "Hi, Billeeoh! Bill Berry! Hi! Lor, bor, howiver dew they dew't? Howiver dew they dew't, bor? Tha'ss whoolly a masterpiece! Hi! Billeeoh! Theer they goo agin!"

The skipper always ends the story there. He is as brave a man as any on the coast. It was he who stood out in Yarmouth Roads all night to look for the Caistor life-

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## THE *MUM TUM*

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boat the night of the disaster—a night when the roads could not be distinguished from the shoals, so broken into tossing white horses was the whole offing—but I believe he slunk down the stairs of the Oxford that night, and left the old beach man still expressing his delighted wonder.

Perhaps FitzGerald thought that Posh would be as excited as the old beach man.

“Mr. Berry” (as every one knows who knows anything about FitzGerald) was the landlord of the house on Markethill, Woodbridge, where the poet lodged. (By the way, he was, so far as I know, no relation of my Bill Berry.) A sum of £50 was due to Dan Fuller on the planking being completed, and FitzGerald was anxious to let Posh have the money as soon as it was needed. He “remembered his debts” even before they became due.

I have already stated that Hunt was a boat-builder at Aldeburgh, and that FitzGerald had, at first, wished Posh to employ

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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him to build the *Mum Tum*, as the *Meum* and *Tuum* was fated to be called.

The kindly jovial relations between the "guv'nor" and his partner could not be better indicated than by the name FitzGerald gives himself at the close, just before he once more signs his name in full. Well, perhaps the legal luminary of Lowestoft would justify his inquiry if Edward FitzGerald was the man who made a lot of money out of salt by saying, "Well, he called himself a herring-merchant."

The schoolmaster who had never heard of either FitzGerald or Omar Khayyám would (according to the nature of the breed) sniff and say "What? A herring-merchant and a tent-maker! My boys are the sons of gentlemen. I can't be expected to know anything about tradesfolk of that class."

But Posh has a sense of humour, and he says, "Ah! He used to laugh about that, the guv'nor did. He'd catch hold o' my jersey, so" (here Posh pinches up a fold of

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## THE MUM TUM

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his blue woollen jersey), "and say, 'Oh dear! Oh dear, Poshy! Two F's in the firm. FitzGerald and Fletcher, herring salesmen—when Poshy catches any, which isn't as often as it might be, you know, Poshy!'" And then he'd laugh. Oh, he was a jolly kind-hearted man if ever there was one."

And then Posh's eyes will grow moist sometimes, I think perhaps with the thought that he might—ah, well! It's too late now.

Posh wishes me to give the dimensions of the lugger, as she was of his own designing and proved a fast and stiff craft. He had given her two feet less length than her beam called for, according to local ideas, and FitzGerald called her "The Cart-horse," because she seemed broad and bluff for her length. She was forty-five feet in length, with a fifteen-foot beam and seven-foot depth. She was first rigged as a lugger, but altered to the more modern "dandy" (something like a ketch but with more rake

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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to the mizzen and with no topmast on the mainmast) before she was sold. Any one about the herring basins who has arrived at fisherman's maturity (about sixty years) will remember the *Mum Tum*, and, so far as she was concerned, the partnership was entirely successful, for no one has a bad word to say for her.

## CHAPTER V

### “NEIGHBOUR’S FARE”

IT is impossible to arrive at the exact sum of money which FitzGerald brought into the partnership between him and Posh, but it must have been something like five hundred pounds. The lugger cost £360 to build, and, in addition, Posh was paid £20 for his services (see *Letters*, p. 309), and various payments had to be made for “sails, cables, warps, ballast, etc.” Posh brought in what nets and gear he had, and his services. The first notion was that FitzGerald should be owner of three-fourths of the concern; but on a valuation being made it was found that the nets and gear contributed by Posh were of greater value than had been supposed, and before the *Meum* and *Tuum* put to sea it was understood that

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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Posh should be half owner with his "governor." Posh is very firm in his conviction that up to the return of the boat from her first cruise there had been no mention of any bill of sale, or mortgage, of the boat and gear to FitzGerald to secure the money he had found. According to him his partner was to be a sleeping partner and no more, and the entire conduct and control of the business were to be vested in Posh. The quarrels and misunderstandings which subsequently arose on this point Posh attributes to certain "interfarin' parties" (and especially to a Lowestoft lawyer), who were under the impression that FitzGerald had not looked after himself so well as he might have done and who thought that this omission should be remedied. Possibly they had an idea that they might "make somethin'" in the course of the remedial measures.

Early in August Posh sailed north with his crew to meet the herring on their way



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## “NEIGHBOUR’S FARE”

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down south. His luck was poor, and on August 26th FitzGerald wrote him from Lowestoft:—

“LOWESTOFT, *Monday, August 26.*

“MY DEAR POSH,

“As we hear nothing of you, we suppose that you have yet caught nothing worth putting in for. And, as I may be here only a Day longer, I write again to you: though I do not know if I have anything to say which needs writing again for. In my former letter, directed to you as this letter will be, I desired you to get a Life Buoy as soon as you could. *That* is for the Good of your People, as well as of yourself. What I now have to say is wholly on your own Account: and that is, to beg you to take the Advice given by the Doctor to your Father: namely, *not* to drink *Beer* and *Ale* more than you can help: but only *Porter*, and, every day, some Gin and Water. I was talking to

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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your Father last Saturday ; and I am convinced that you inherit a family complaint : if I had known of this a year ago I would not have drenched you with all the Scotch, and Norwich, Ale which I have given you. . . . Do not neglect this Advice, as being only an old Woman's Advice ; you have, even at your early time of life, suffered from *Gravel* ; and you may depend upon it that Gravel will turn to *Stone*, unless you do something like what I tell you, and which the Doctor has told your Father. And I know that there is no Disease in the World which makes a young Man *old* sooner than Stone : No Disease that *wears* him more. You should take plenty of *Tea* ; some Gin and Water every night ; and *no* Ale, or Beer ; but only Porter ; and not much of that. If you do not choose to buy Gin for yourself, buy some for *me* : and keep it on board : and drink some every Day, or Night. Pray remember this : and *do it*.

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## “NEIGHBOUR’S FARE”

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“I have been here since I wrote my first Letter to Scarboro’; that is to say, a week ago. Till To-day I have been taking out some Friends every day: they leave the place in a day or two, and I shall go home; though I dare say not for long. Your wife seems nearly right again; I saw her To-day. Your Father has engaged to sell his Shrimps to Levi, for this season and next, at 4s. a Peck. Your old *Gazelle* came in on Saturday with all her Nets gone to pieces; the Lugger *Monitor* came in here yesterday to alter her Nets—from *Sunk* to *Swum*, I believe. So here is a Lowestoft Reporter for you: and you may never have it after all. But, if you do, do not forget what I have told you. Your Father thinks that you may have missed the Herring by going *outward*, where they were first caught: whereas the Herring had altered their course to inshore. . . . Better to miss many Herrings than have the Stone.

“E. FG.”

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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Here, again, the delicate solicitude of this perfect gentleman is apparent. "If you do not choose to buy Gin for yourself, buy some for *me*: and keep it on board: and drink some every Day, or Night." That is to say, "If you think that you cannot afford to buy gin for yourself don't worry about the expense. I'll see you are not put to any extra cost. But I can't bear to think that you may suffer for the want of a medicine because of your East Anglian parsimony."

It must be remembered that East Anglia was notorious for the frequency of the disease in question. The late William Cadge, of Norwich, probably the finest lithotomist in the world (as Thompson was the greatest lithotritist), once told me that he had performed over four hundred operations in the Norwich Hospital for this disease alone.

But FitzGerald's fears concerning Posh were not realised. He seems to have had an

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## “NEIGHBOUR’S FARE”

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especial dread of the disease (as who has not?), for in a letter to Frederic Tennyson of January 29th previously (II, 89, Eversley Edition) he wrote (of Montaigne): “One of his Consolations for *The Stone* is that it makes one less unwilling to part with Life.”

Levi was a Lowestoft fishmonger, referred to in the footnote of *Two Suffolk Friends*, p. 108.

The *Gazelle* was the “punt” or longshore boat which Posh bought at Southwold, and called (by reason of her splendid qualities) *The Little Wonder*.

The difference between “sunk” and “swum” herring nets would be unintelligible to a modern herring fisher. Now the nets are thirty feet in depth, are buoyed on the surface of the sea, and are kept perpendicular (like a wall two miles long) by the weight of heavy cables or “warps” which stretch along the bottom of the nets. I am, of course, referring to North Sea fishing only, and not to the longshore punts,

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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whose nets are not half the depth of the North Sea fleets.

In FitzGerald's time if the herring were expected to swim deep the nets were sunk *below* the cables or warps which strung them together, and if they were thought to be swimming high they were buoyed above the warps, the system of fishing being called "sunk" in the former case and "swum" in the latter. Now *all* nets are "swum," that is to say, all are above the warps and are buoyed on the surface. But the depth has increased so much (to what is technically known as "twenty-score mesh," which comes to about thirty feet) that there is no need to alter their setting.

Posh's wife, whose state of health is referred to in this letter, survived till 1892, but for many years suffered from tuberculosis in the lungs.

The *Monitor* was a Kessingland craft, and belonged to one Hutton.

But whether Posh fished with "sunk" or





STRAND COTTAGES, WHERE JOSH LIVED, NO. 8, HIS COTTAGE, IS MARKED  
WITH A WHITE CROSS



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## “NEIGHBOUR'S FARE”

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“swum” nets his luck was out for the season of 1867. The fish as a rule get down to the Norfolk coast about the beginning of October, and Posh had followed them down from Scarborough. About the end of September, or the beginning of October, FitzGerald wrote to his partner, addressing the letter to 8 Strand Cottages, Lowestoft, in the expectation that the *Meum and Tuum* had come south with the rest of the herring drifters, Yarmouth, Lowestoft, North and South Shields, and Scotch.

“WOODBRIDGE, *Saturday*.

“DEAR POSH,

“I write you a line, because I suppose it possible that you may be at home some time to-morrow. If you are not, no matter. I do not know if I shall be at Lowestoft next week: but you are not to suppose that, if I do do [*sic*] not go there just now I have anything to complain of. I am not sure but that a Friend may come here to

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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see me, and also, unless the weather keep warmer than it was some days ago, I scarce care to sleep in my cabin : which has no fire near it as yours has.

"If I do not go to Lowestoft just yet, I shall be there before very long: at my friend Miss Green's, if my Ship be laid up.

"I see in the Paper that there have been some 40 lasts of Herring landed in your market during this last week: the Southwold Boats doing best. I began to think the Cold might keep the Fish in deep water, so that *swum* nets would scarce reach them yet. But this is mere guess. I told you not to answer all my letters: but you can write me a line once a week to say what you are doing. I hope *our* turn for "Neighbour's fare" is not quite lost, though long a coming.

"Newson and Jack are gone home for Sunday. To-night is a grand Horseman-ship, to which I would make you go if you

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## “NEIGHBOUR’S FARE”

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were here. Remember me to all your  
People and believe me yours

“E. FG.

“I see that the . . . [illegible] vessel:  
and, as far as I see, deserved to do so.”

Miss Green was the landlady of the  
house at 12 Marine Terrace, Lowestoft,  
where FitzGerald usually stayed when he  
did not sleep aboard the *Scandal*.

Up to the date of the letter, and, indeed,  
throughout the season of 1867, the *Meum*  
and *Tuum* had bad luck. FitzGerald  
thought it was time that the luck should  
change, for “Neighbour’s fare” is defined in  
*Sea Words and Phrases along the Suffolk*  
*Coast* as “Doing as well as one’s neigh-  
bours. ‘I mayn’t make a fortune, but I  
look for “Neighbour’s fare” nevertheless.’”

## CHAPTER VI

### THE LUCK O' THE *MUM TUM*

“**N**EIGHBOUR’S fare” was long in coming to FitzGerald in his venture as a “herring merchant.” But he was happy enough in the consciousness that he was doing Posh a good turn. Whether or not Posh had a greater share of the earnings of the boat than he was entitled to I cannot say. Certainly he began to thrive exceedingly about this time, and, as an old longshoreman seven years Posh’s senior, said to me the other day, “He might ha’ been a gennleman! He used to kape his greyhounds, and he had as pratty a mare as the’ wuz in Lowestoft. Ah! Mr. FitzGerald was a *good* gennleman to him—that he *wuz*!”

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## THE LUCK O' THE MUM TUM

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Once again the epithet "good," which he so pre-eminently merited.

But whether the year had been bad or good, it was necessary for the sleeping partner to look into the accounts of the firm.

On Christmas Day of 1867, when the season was over and all the herring drifters had "made up," that is to say, had worked out their accounts and struck a balance of profit or loss, Fitzgerald wrote to Posh:—

"WOODBRIDGE, *Christmas Day*.

"DEAR CAPTAIN,

"Unless I hear from you to-morrow that *you* are coming over *here*, I shall most likely run over myself to Miss Green's at Lowestoft—by the Train which gets there about 2.

"I shall look in upon you in the evening, if so be that I do not see you in the course of the day. I say I shall look in upon [*sic*] *to-morrow*, I dare say:—But, as this is

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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Christmas time and I suppose you have many friends to see, I shall not want you to be at school every evening.

"This is Newson's piloting week, so he cannot come.

"E. FG."

Posh did not go to Woodbridge, so FitzGerald went to Miss Green's, whence, on December the 28th, he wrote one of his most characteristic letters (in that it embraced interests so widely different) to Professor Cowell. The letter begins with a reference to M. Garcin de Tassy and his "annual oration," and continues with some passages of great interest concerning the *Rubáiyát* and Attar's "Birds." (Dr. Aldis Wright's Eversley Edition of *Letters*, II, 100.) Then from a delicate and dainty piece of criticism the poet turns to his herring business. "I have come here to wind up accounts for our Herring-lugger: much against us as the season has been a bad one. My dear

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## THE LUCK O' THE MUM TUM

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Captain [Posh], who looks in his Cottage like King Alfred in the Story, was rather saddened by all this, as he had prophesied better things. I tell him that if he is but what I think him—and surely my sixty years of considering men will not so deceive me at last!—I would rather lose money with him than gain it with others. Indeed I never proposed Gain, as you may imagine: but only to have some Interest with this dear Fellow.”

Well, he had his wish, though Posh maintains that there *was* gain in the business at a certain time to be referred to hereafter, and that there might have been plenty of gain but for the “interfarin’ parties” before mentioned.

From the first there was a difficulty in persuading Posh to keep any accounts of either outgoings or incomings. He seems to have paid a bill when he thought of it, or when he had the money for it handy. But no idea of book-keeping, even in its

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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most rudimentary form, was ever entertained by him.

And FitzGerald had, before ever the partnership was an accomplished fact, impressed on Posh the importance of remembering his debts.

Before the spring fishing began in 1868 the question of accounts came to the fore. On March the 29th the sleeping partner wrote from Woodbridge :—

“DEAR POSHY,

“I have your Letter of this Morning:— I suppose that you have got mine also. I hope that you understood what I said in it—about the Bills, I mean—that you should put down in writing *all* outgoings, and in such a way as you, or I, might easily reckon them up: I mean, so as to see what *each* amounts to—No man’s Memory can be trusted in such matters; and I think that *your* Memory (jostled about, as you say, with many different calls, [*sic* no close to



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## THE LUCK O' THE *MUM TUM*

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parenthesis] needs to have *writing* to refer to. *Do not suppose for one moment* that I do not trust you, my good fellow : nor that I think you have made any great blunder in what Accounts you *did* keep last year. I only mean that a man ought to be able to point *out at once*, to himself or to others, all the items of an Account ; to do which, you know, gave you great Trouble—You must not be too proud to learn a little of some one used to such business : *as Mr. Spalding*, for instance.

“If you think the Oil and *Cutch* are as good, and as cheap, at Lowestoft as I can get them here, why not get them at once at Lowestoft ? About that *green Paint* for the Lugger’s bottom :—Mr. Silver got some *so very good* for *Pasifull’s* Smack last year that I think it might be worth while to get some, if we could, from *his* Merchant. You told me that what *you* got at Lowestoft was *not* very good.

“I am *very glad* that the Lugger is so

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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well thought of that any one else wants to build from her. For she was *your* child, you know.

"Mr. Durrant has never sent me the plants. I doubt he must have lost some more children. Do not go to him again, if you went before. I daresay I shall be running over to Lowestoft soon. But I am not quite well.

"E. FG.

"Remember me to your Family: you do not tell me if your Mother is better."

The Mr. Spalding here referred to was at that time the manager for a large firm of agricultural implement makers. Subsequently he became the curator of the museum at Colchester, and the letters from FitzGerald to him which were handed to Mr. Francis Hindes Groome formed the most valuable part of the second part of *Two Suffolk Friends* called "Edward FitzGerald. An Aftermath."

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## THE LUCK O' THE *MUM TUM*

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“Oil” and “cutch” are preservatives for the herring nets. The oil is linseed, and the nets are soaked in it before they are tanned by the cutch. Cutch is a dark resinous stuff, which is thrown into a copper full of water and boiled till it is dissolved. Then the liquid is thrown over the nets and permitted to soak in. After the nets are soaked in linseed oil, and before they are tanned, they are hung up to dry in the open air. The process has to be repeated several times during each fishing, and those who are familiar with Lowestoft and Yarmouth must also be familiar with the sight and smell of the nets, hanging out on railings, either on public open spaces or in private net yards. Where rails are not obtainable the nets are often spread on the ground, and an ingenious idea for the quaint shape of Yarmouth (unique with its narrow “rows”) is that the rows represent the narrow footpaths between the spaces on which the nets used to be laid to dry.

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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"Pasifull" is sometimes called "Percival," sometimes "Pasifall," and sometimes as in this letter. His Christian name was Ablett, and he was both a fisherman and a yacht hand.

Mr. Durrant was a market gardener and fruiterer in Lowestoft, and his sons carry on the same business in three shops in Lowestoft now. One of them remembers FitzGerald as a visitor and "a queer old chap," and that's all he knows about him.

I do not think Posh troubled himself much about the accounts. But there was another subject already broached which was to cause some unpleasantness between the partners.

Some of FitzGerald's friends, both at Lowestoft and elsewhere, had become uneasy at the hold which Posh had obtained over him. They feared lest he should become a baron of beef at which Posh could cut and come again. More than one advised him that he should have some better

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## THE LUCK O' THE *MUM TUM*

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security than a mere partnership understanding, that he should, in fact, insist on having a bill of sale, or mortgage of the *Meum and Tuum* and her gear to secure the money he had found. Possibly he was swayed by Posh's backwardness in the matter of account. Certainly he came to the conclusion that his friends were right, and that he should have a charge on the boat and her gear. Now I believe that Posh tells the truth when he says that in the first instance there was no mention of any such charge. And he was not a business man enough to see the reasonableness of FitzGerald's demand. He was, moreover, urged by the secretiveness of his race, the love of keeping private affairs from outsiders, and he bitterly resented the proposition. Indeed, during the early months of 1868, there were constant semi-quarrels, which were as constantly patched up. FitzGerald loved the man too well to quarrel with him definitely. Besides, Posh

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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had not been well. In January FitzGerald wrote to Professor Cowell (*Letters*, II, 103, Eversley Edition): "I have spent lots of money on my Herring-lugger, which has made but a poor season. So now we are going (like wise men) to lay out a lot more for Mackerel; and my Captain (a dear Fellow) is got ill, which is the worst of all."

But in this first instance Posh gave way. On April 14th FitzGerald wrote Mr. Spalding: "I believe that he and I shall now sign the Mortgage Papers that make him owner of *Half Meum and Twum*. I only get out of him that he can't say he sees much amiss in the Deed." But Posh is still bitter about that deed, and still blames his old "guv'nor" for having listened to the "interfarin' parties." He does not know what was the matter with him that spring. "I was quare, sir," he says. "I don't know what ta was. But I was quare."

He got well in time to go off after the spring mackerel, which used to be a regular

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## THE LUCK O' THE *MUM TUM*

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fishing season off Lowestoft, though now mackerel are getting as scarce as salmon off the Norfolk and Suffolk coast. But the *Meum and Tuum's* bad luck still followed her with the longer and bigger meshed nets. On June 16th, 1868, FitzGerald wrote to Mr. Spalding (*Two Suffolk Friends*, p. 113):—

“Mackerel still come in very slow, sometimes none at all: the dead calm nights play the deuce with the Fishing, and I see no prospect of change in the weather till the Mackerel shall be changing their Quarters. I am vexed to see the Lugger come in Day after day so poorly stored after all the Labour and Time and Anxiety given to the work by her Crew; but I can do no more, and at any rate take my share of the Loss very lightly. I can afford it better than they can. I have told Newson to set sail and run home any Day, Hour, or Minute, when he wishes to see his Wife and Family.”

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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Newson and Jack were down at Lowestoft with the *Scandal*, and it was characteristic of FitzGerald to give his skipper leave to run home when he wished. FitzGerald always liked the *Meum and Tuum* to be in harbour on a Sunday so that the men could see their wives and families and have a "good hot dinner."



## CHAPTER VII

### “FLAGSTONE FITZGERALD”

NOW that the *Meum and Tuum* was ready for work FitzGerald's anxiety for the lives of her crew made him insist upon their taking life-belts aboard with them, although the mate had stated that no one would wear them. On April 24th a letter was written to Posh from Woodbridge.

“DEAR POSHY,

“I hear from Mr. Birt this morning that the Life Belts were sent off to you yesterday—*directed to your house*. So I suppose they will reach you without your having to go look for them. But you can enquire at the Rail if they don't show up.

“Mr. Birt says that he makes the Belts of *two* sizes for the Life Boat. But he has sent *all* yours of the large size, except one

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EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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for the Boy. I had told him I thought you were all of you biggish Men, except the Boy. I suppose I have blundered as usual. But if the Jackets are too big you must change some of them. That will only cost carriage; and that I must pay for my Blunder.

"I doubt you have been unlucky in your drying days—yesterday we had such violent showers as would have washed out your oil, I think. And it must have rained much last night. But you share in *my* luck now, you know.

"But I am very glad the children are better. I thought it was bad weather for fever. There has been great sickness here, I think. Mr. Gowing and his house are as tedious as Mr. Dove and *my* house; we must hope that does not mean to play as false.

"I am very sorry for your loss of lines and anchors.

"E. FG."

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## “FLAGSTONE FITZGERALD”

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Mr. Gowing was, so far as Posh can recollect, a Woodbridge builder, and Mr. Dove was the Builder who altered Little Grange for FitzGerald. Whether or not the life-belts fitted or were ever used I can't ascertain. But I believe that one was in existence a year or so ago. The “lines and anchors” were, Posh thinks, lost from his old punt the *Gazelle*.

For the sake of convenience I give a letter here which is somewhat out of date, but inasmuch as it has nothing to do with the fishing but only with the trust which FitzGerald had in Posh it may very well come in here.

“MARKETHILL, WOODBRIDGE, *October 2nd.*

“DEAR POSH,

“I forgot to tell you that I had desired a Day and Night Telescope to be left *for me* at the Lowestoft Railway Station—Please to enquire for it: and, if it be there, this Letter of mine may

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EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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be sufficient Warrant for *you* to take the Glass.

"Do not, however, take the Glass *out to sea* till we have tried it.

"We got here yesterday. I shall not be at Lowestoft *this week* at any rate.

"Yours,

"EDWARD FITZGERALD.

"Please to send me word about the Glass. I left a note for you in George Howe's hands before we started. I was sorry not to see you; but you knew where to find me on Monday Evening."

The glass was, Posh assures me, a good one. But no one knows what became of it. Later FitzGerald again mentions the glass.

"WOODBRIDGE, *Monday*.

"DEAR POSH,

"If I could have made sure from your letter that you were going to stop on shore this Day, I would have run over to





WOODBIDGE RIVER (EVENING) WHERE THE "SCANDAL" BERTHED

To face page 97

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## “FLAGSTONE FITZGERALD”

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see you. You tell me of getting a Job done: but I cannot be sure if you are having it done To-day: and I do not go to Lowestoft for fear you may be put to sea again.

“Of course you will get anything done to Boat or Net that you think proper.

“You did not tell me how the Spy-Glass answers. But do not trouble yourself to write.

“Yours truly,

“FLAGSTONE FITZGERALD.”

As soon as I asked Posh the meaning of the signature “Flagstone FitzGerald” he burst out laughing. “What!” said he. “Hain’t yew niver heard about ole Flagstone? He was a retail and wholesale grocer and gin’ral store dealer at Yarmouth named——” (well, we will say Smith for purposes of reference. As the man’s sons still carry on his old business here in Lowestoft it is as well not to give the true name. By the

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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way, I do not mean that the sons carry on the "flagstone" business), "and he owned tew or t'ree boots and stored 'em hisself. Well, when they come to make up (and o' coorse he'd chudged the men for the stores, ah! and chudged 'em high!) they went t'rew the stores an' found as he'd weighted up the sugar and such like wi' flagstone! Well, they made it sa hot for him at Yarmouth that he had ta mewve ta Lowes-toft, and he was allust called F'lagstone Smith arter that. I reckon as the Guv'nor heerd the yarn and liked it. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

And it isn't a bad yarn for one which is actually true in every respect.

About the same time, or a little later (for it is impossible to fix the date of these letters definitely), Fitzgerald wrote:—

"WOODBRIDGE, *Saturday*.

"MY DEAR LAD,

"I suppose the Lugger had returned, and that you had gone out in her again



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## “FLAGSTONE FITZGERALD”

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before my last Note, with Newson's Paper, reached you. I have a fancy that you will go home this evening. But whether you are not [*sic*] do not *stay* at home to answer me. I have felt, as I said, pretty sure that the Boat was back from Harwich : and we have had no such weather as to make me anxious about you. One night it blew ; but not a gale : only a strong Wind.

“I shall be expecting Newson up next week.

“I have thought of you while I have been walking out these fine moonlight nights. But I doubt your fish must have gone off before this.

“You see I have nothing to say to you ; only I thought you might to [*sic*] hear from me whenever you should come back.

“E. FG.”

## CHAPTER VIII

### HOW FISHERS FISHED

THE poor mackerel season ended in the second week of July. Why, when mackerel were so scarce, the *Meum and Tuum* did not give up the fishing and try for "midsummer herring" it is difficult to understand, and Posh does not remember the reason, if there was one. Possibly the change of nets, etc., etc., was too much trouble. Anyhow, the season was unprofitable for the mackerel boats. On Monday, July 13th, FitzGerald was still on the *Scandal* at Lowestoft, and wrote from there to Mr. Spalding (*Two Suffolk Friends*, p. 113): "Posh made up and paid off on Saturday. I have not yet asked him, but I suppose he has just paid his way, I mean so far as Grub goes. . . . Last night it

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## HOW FISHERS FISHED

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lightened to the South, as we sat in the Suffolk Gardens—I, and Posh, and Mrs. Posh. . . .”

The “making up” may require some little explanation. The “drift” fishing—i.e. the herring and mackerel fishing (for though sprats and pilchards are caught by drift nets, it is unnecessary to consider them when dealing with the great North Sea drift fishing)—is carried on on a system of sharing profits between owners and fishermen. Trawlers, i.e. craft that fish with a “trawl” net for flat fish, haddocks, etc., etc., are managed differently.

“Making up” is the technical term for balancing profit and loss of a season, and ascertaining the sums which are due to owners and crew respectively.

In the days when Fitzgerald was a “herring merchant,” the systems of Yarmouth and Lowestoft were different. At Yarmouth the owner of the boat took nine shares out of sixteen, and bore all losses of

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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damaged or lost nets, etc., the remaining seven shares being divided among the crew in varying proportions. For instance, the skipper took  $1\frac{3}{4}$  or two shares, the mate  $1\frac{1}{4}$  or  $1\frac{1}{2}$ , and so on down to the boy with his one-half or three-eighths share. At Lowestoft the shares were also divided into sixteen ; but the owner took only eight, and the crew the other eight. The losses of gear, nets, etc., however, were borne equally between the two lots of eight shares, and, on the whole, I believe the Yarmouth system was more favourable to the men, though the Lowestoft system made the skipper and crew more careful of the nets and gear than they might have been did not they suffer for any loss of them. The introduction of steam drifters has made the shares complicated in the extreme. The owners take so much as owners of the boat, so much for the engines, etc., etc., and, in fact, the owners get the share of a very greedy lion. However, the prices rule so high nowa-

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## HOW FISHERS FISHED

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days, and the catches are occasionally so large (the other day a steam drifter brought in over £200 worth of fish to Grimsby as the result of one night's fishing), that the great Martinmas fishing of the east coast has become a gamble in which fortunes may be made and lost. Many a boat earns over £2000 from October to December. A lucky skipper may take £200 for his share of the home fishing alone. But such figures would have sounded fantastic in FitzGerald's day, for I have been assured over and over again by herring fishers that in the sixties and seventies, ay, even in the eighties of last century, £20 was a "good season's share" for a prominent hand of a successful drifter.

Posh, as half owner, would take four-sixteenth shares, and as skipper would probably take another two-sixteenths, so that he would draw more than any one else.

Some time during the spring or summer of 1868 there was great excitement amongst the fishing-boat owners of Lowes-

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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toft and other ports on account of an Act just passed regulating the building of vessels, having especial regard to the ventilation of the cuddy, forecastle, or the men's sleeping quarters. Posh tells me that many owners of drifters considered that the Act applied to all craft, including fishing boats, and that great expense was undergone by some over-conscientious owners in fitting ventilating drums and shafts in accordance with the Act. If the statute applied to any drifter it would apply to the *Meum and Tuum*, and FitzGerald evidently thought that the intention of the Act was that fishing boats should be exempt. He proved to be right, for the regulations were never enforced on fishing boats. He wrote to Posh:—

“WOODBRIDGE, *Saturday*.

“DEAR POSH,

“You must lay out three halfpence on the *Eastern Times* for last Friday. In that Newspaper there is a good deal written

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## HOW FISHERS FISHED

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about that Act for altering Vessels: the Writer is quite sure—that the Act does *not* apply to Fishing craft; and he writes as if he knew what he was writing about. But most likely if he had written just the contrary, it would have seemed as right to me. Do you therefore fork out three half-pennies, as I tell you, and study the matter and talk it over with others. The owners of Vessels should lose no time in meeting, and in passing some Resolution on the Subject.

“I have not seen Newson, but West was down at the Ferry some days back and saw him. For a wonder, he [Newson] was *Fishing!*—for Codlings—for there really was nothing else to do: no Woodbridge Vessels coming in and out the Harbour, nor any work for the Salvage Smacks. He spoke of his Wife as much the same: Smith, the Pilot, thought her much altered when last he saw her.

“You will buy such things as you spoke

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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of wanting at the Lowestoft Sales if they go at a reasonable price. As to the claim made by your Yawl, I suppose it will come down to half. The builders are coming to my house again next week, I believe, having left their work undone.

"Now, here is a Letter for your Mantel-piece to-morrow—Sunday—I don't think I have more to say.

"Yours E. FG.

"Mr. Durrant has never sent me the hamper of Flowers he promised.

"P.S. I post this letter before Noon so as you will receive it this evening : and can get the Newspaper I tell you of:

"*Eastern Times* for *Friday* last sold at Chapman's."

Posh does not remember whether he laid out the three halfpence or not. But he doubts it. "I knowed as that couldn't ha' nothin' ta dew along o' us," says he. And he stuck to his guns and proved to be right.







THE "HAPPY NEW YEAR" YAWL, BELONGING TO POSH'S BEACH COMPANY

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## HOW FISHERS FISHED

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“West” has been mentioned before as being an old fellow with whom FitzGerald used to navigate the river Deben in a small boat before the building of the *Scandal*. Newson’s wife, like Posh’s, was often ailing. Kind “Fitz” had written previously (July 25th, 1868; *Letters*, Eversley Edition, p. 106) to Professor Cowell:—

“. . . I only left Lowestoft partly to avoid a Volunteer Camp there which filled the Town and People with Bustle: and partly that my Captain might see his Wife: who cannot last very much longer I think: scarcely through the Autumn, surely. She goes about, nurses her children, etc., but grows visibly thinner, weaker and more ailing.”

The “claim made by your yawl” refers to a claim for salvage made by the company of beach men (of which Posh was a member) owning a yawl. FitzGerald (as has been seen before) always took a humorous in-

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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terest in the doings of the "sea pirates," yclept beach men or "salwagers," and he doubtless enjoyed his little chuckle at Posh's expense.

The builders were at work on Little Grange, which FitzGerald predicted he would never live in but would die in. However, he falsified both predictions, for he lived in the house ten years and died in Norfolk.

Mr. Durrant was still in default. I doubt if FitzGerald ever got those flowers. They were plants, Posh tells me, which FitzGerald wished to plant out at Little Grange.

I can find no record of the principal, the Martinmas or Autumn, fishing of 1868. But in the spring of 1869 the *Meum* and *Thum* went to the "West Fishing" for mackerel, even as a large number of our modern steam drifters go now, to the indignation of the pious fishermen of Penzance, Newlyn, and St. Ives. These good fellows

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## HOW FISHERS FISHED

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of the west have, I think, some reason to complain that it is unfair that they should suffer for righteousness' sake. Looking at the point in dispute impartially, it *does* seem hard that the men of the locality should see Easterlings bringing in good catches of fish as the result of what the Cornishmen regard as a desecration of "the Lord's Day." The religious sentiment which prevents the western and southern men from putting off on Sunday is genuine and sincere enough. The Scotch herring boats, which come in their thousands to Yarmouth and Lowestoft for the autumn fishing, are always in harbour from Saturday night to Monday morning, though the local boats fish all days and nights. But by keeping in harbour the Scotchmen offend the sensibilities of no one, whereas there is much bitterness caused in the west by the refusal of the Easterlings to fall in with local custom.

On March 1st, 1869, FitzGerald wrote to

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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Professor Cowell (*Letters*, II, 107, Eversley Edition) :—

"MY DEAR COWELL,

" . . . My lugger Captain has just left me to go on his Mackerel Voyage to the Western Coast ; and I don't know when I shall see him again. . . . You can't think what a grand, tender Soul this is, lodged in a suitable carcase."

FitzGerald thought very highly of that "carcase" of Posh's, as will be seen from the story of the Laurence portrait, set forth hereinafter, as the lawyers, whom Posh hates so much, would say.

The sleeping partner throughout seems to have had more anxiety on account of Posh's sea hazards than on account of business losses. How the mackerel paid I do not know, but Posh was in time to go north for the beginning of the herring fishing in July.

CHAPTER IX

ECCENTRICITIES OF A GOOD  
HEART

THERE must always be an interval ashore between the return of the drifters from the western voyage and their sailing north to follow the herring down from Aberdeen to Yarmouth. And during this interval, in 1869, FitzGerald wrote one or two letters to Posh which have survived that wholesale destruction of which their recipient speaks.

“WOODBRIDGE, *Friday*.

“Newson is up here with the Yacht, Posh; and we shall start to-morrow with the Tide about  $10\frac{1}{2}$ . I doubt if we shall get out of the harbour: or, even if we do that, get to Lowestoft in the Day. But you can just give a look to the Southward

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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to-morrow evening, or Sunday. I write this, because we *may* not have more than a day to stay at Lowestoft.

"E. FG."

Despite his silk hat and his boa, Fitzgerald was a keen and genuine lover of yachting. Even in the way in which he took his enjoyment of this he was original. Posh asserts that he has seen his "guv'nor" lying in the lee scuppers while the *Scandal* was heeling over in a stiff breeze, and permitting the wash of the sea to run over him till he was drenched to the skin. Indeed, although his long lean body looked frail, he was reckless in the way in which he treated it. Posh tells one story which I give in his words. He vouches for its truth, and I give it on his authority and not as vouching for its accuracy myself. Personally I believe the tale is true enough, but I admit that it requires a power of assimilation which is not given to all.



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## ECCENTRICITIES OF A GOOD HEART

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“He! he!” says Posh. “He was a rum un sometimes, was my guv’nor! I remember one day when the *Scandal* was a layin’ agin’ the wharf where the trawl market is now. Mr. Sims Reeves, the lawyer [this was a prominent counsel on the Norwich circuit, not the famous tenor], and some other friends came over for a sail, and they and Tom [Newson] was below while me and Jack and the guv’nor was on deck, astarn. The mains’l was h’isted, but there wasn’t no heads’l on her, and we lay theer riddy to get unner way. There was a fresh o’ wind blowin’ from the eastard, not wery stiddy, and as we lay theer the boom kep’ a wamblin’ and a jerkin’ from side to side, a wrenchin’ the mainsheet block a rum un. The guv’nor was a readin’ of a letter as had just been brought down by the poost. ‘Posh,’ he say, ‘here’s a letter with some money I niver expected to git,’ he say. ‘That’s a good job,’ when just then the boom come over wallop and

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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caught him fair on the side of his hid, and knocked him oover into the harbour like one o'clock. He was a wearin' of his topper same as us'al, and all of a sudden up he come agin just as Jack an' me was raychin' oover arter him. His topper come up aisy like, as though 'twas a life-buoy if I may say soo, and unnerneath it come the fur boa, and then the guv'nor. And as true as I set here he was still a holdin' that letter out in front of him in both hands. Well, I couldn't help it. I bust out a laughin', and soo did Jack an' all, and then we rayched down and copped hold on him and h'isted him aboard all right and tight, but as wet as a soused harrin'. He come up a laughin', playased as Punch, an' give orders to cast off' and git up headsail ta oncet. And would yew believe me, he wouldn't goo below ta shift afore we got right out to the Corton light, though Mr. Reeves axed him tew time and time agin! Not he. That was blowin' a fresh

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## ECCENTRICITIES OF A GOOD HEART

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o' wind, an' he jest lay down in the lee scuppers, and 'I can't get no wetter, Posh,' he say, and let the lipper slosh oover him. Ah! He was a master rum un, was my ole guv'nor!"

The northern herring voyage of the *Meum and Tuum* in 1869, that is to say, the eight weeks' fishing down the east coast from Aberdeen to Lowestoft from the beginning of August to the end of September, seems to have been about up to what FitzGerald might have called "Neighbour's fare." He wrote to Mrs. W. H. Thompson (the wife of the Master of Trinity): "My lugger has had (along with her neighbours) such a Season hitherto of Winds as no one remembers. We made £450 in the North Sea" (that is to say, in the north fishing before the home Martinmas fishing began); "and (just for fun) I did wish to realise £5 in my pocket. But my Captain would take it all to pay Bills. But if he makes another £400 this Home

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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Voyage! Oh, then we shall have money in our pockets. I do wish this. For the anxiety about all these people's lives has been so much more to me than all the amusement I have got from the Business, that I think I will draw out of it if I can see my Captain sufficiently firm on his legs to carry it on alone. 'True, there will still be the same risk to him and his ten men, but they don't care; only I sit here listening to the Winds in the Chimney, and always thinking of the eleven hanging at my own finger ends" (*Letters*, II, 110, Eversley Edition).

The number of hands on a herring drifter used to be eleven, which seemed excessive till the labour of hauling nearly two miles of nets by hand is remembered. Now that almost every drifter which goes into the North Sea has a donkey engine to do the hardest work of the hauling the number aboard the dandies is lessened to nine.

This letter to Mrs. Thompson is the first



A LOWESTOFT "DANDY"

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## ECCENTRICITIES OF A GOOD HEART

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suggestion that FitzGerald has any idea of ending the partnership, a suggestion which became fully developed in 1870.

But before Posh was hard at it every day, fishing off the Norfolk coast, his "guv'nor" wrote him a note in a much more cheerful strain. Indeed, this is a letter by itself, unlike any other of the writer's which I have seen, though (as Dr. Aldis Wright says) "FitzGerald never wrote a letter like any one else." The power of throwing himself "into the picture," the humour of conscious imitation, were never more brilliantly illustrated than by this hail-fellow-well-met letter, written by the scholar and poet:—

"MARKETHILL, WOODBRIDGE, *Wednesday*.

"Now then, Posh, here is a letter for you, sooner than you looked for, and moreover you will have to answer it as soon as you can.

"I want you to learn from your friend

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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*Dan Fuller* what particulars you can about that Lugger we saw at Mutford Bridge. Draft of Water, Length of Keel, What sails and Stores; and what *Price*; and any other Questions you may think necessary to ask. If the man here who has a notion of buying such a Vessel to make a Yacht of on this river sees any hope of doing so at a reasonable rate, and with a reasonable hope of Success, he will go over next week to look at the Vessel. He of course knows he would have to alter all her inside: but I told him your Opinion that she would do well *cutter rigged*.

“So now, Poshy, do go down as soon as is convenient, to Dan, and stand him *half a pint* and don't tell him what you are come about, but just turn the conversation (in a *Salvaging* sort of way) to the old Lugger and get me the particulars I ask for. Perhaps Dan's heart will open—*over Half a Pint*—as yours has been known to do. And if you write to me as soon as you can



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## ECCENTRICITIES OF A GOOD HEART

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what you can learn, why I take my Blessed Oath that I'll be d——d if I don't stand you Half a Pint, so help me Bob, the next time I go to Lowestoft. I hope I make myself understood.

“The *Elsie* is being gutted, and new timbered, and Mr. Silver has bought a new dandy of forty tons, and Ablett Percival” (cf. spelling in other letters) “is to be Captain. I think of going down the river soon to see Captain Newson. I have been on the River To-day and thought that I should have been with you on the way to Yarmouth or Southwold if I had stayed at Lowestoft. Instead of which I have been to the Lawyer here.

“Good-bye, Poshy, and believe me always yours to the last Half Pint.

“E. FG.

“I enclose a paper with my questions marked, to which you can add short answers.”

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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Dan Fuller was the builder of the *Meum* and *Tuum*. His son is still living, and a well-known mechanic in Lowestoft. Mutford Bridge will be better recognised as the bridge at Oulton Broad.

Once again FitzGerald chuckles at the morality of the "salwagers," and chuckles again at the expansiveness of the East Anglian "half a pint," which may mean anything between its nominal measure and the full holding capacity of the drinker—which is as vague as "half a pint," itself.

The *Elsie* was a yacht which belonged to a syndicate of Woodbridge yachtsmen, of whom Mr. Silver (a Woodbridge friend of FitzGerald's) was one and Mr. Manby was another. The two friends who went to Mutford Bridge to look at the lugger were (so far as Posh can remember) Mr. Silver and Mr. Cobbold, of Cobbold's Bank. Posh says that the lugger was a beauty. But nothing came of the visit, and the Woodbridge man did not buy her.

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## ECCENTRICITIES OF A GOOD HEART

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As yet the warning which FitzGerald had given Posh in his sermon had (so far as the letters tell us) served its purpose. But the letters appear to be deceitful in this, and the next chapter must deal with a painful phase of the partnership.

## CHAPTER X

### POSH'S SPIRIT OF INDEPENDENCE

THE hopes for the home fishing of 1869 should have been good. On August 30th, 1869 (*Two Suffolk Friends*, p. 114), FitzGerald wrote to Mr. Spalding from Lowestoft: "You will see by the enclosed that Posh has had a little better luck than hitherto. One reason for my not going to Woodbridge is, that I think it possible that this N.E. wind may blow him hither to tan his nets. Only please God it don't tan him and his people first."

Herring are, as our East Anglian fishermen say, "ondependable" in their travels. They come south along the coast from the

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## POSH'S SPIRIT OF INDEPENDENCE

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north of Scotland till they are in their prime (full-roed, fat fish) off Yarmouth in October. But their arrival at the various ports along the east coast can never be fixed for a certain date. This year, for instance (1907), owing to the warm August and September they have been late in coming south from Hull. Generally "longshores" are caught off Lowestoft late in August or early in September, and by the end of September the home and Scotch fleets are congesting the herring basins. This year, however, I had my first longshores brought me yesterday, the 1st of October, and there are not a dozen Scotch craft to be seen in the basins.

FitzGerald stayed at Lowestoft till the north-easters *did* blow Posh home. And perhaps he would have been happier had he gone back to Woodbridge before the return of the *Meum and Tuum*. As it was, Posh had "some bare" on regatta day (very late that year), and this upset his "guv'nor."

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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He wrote to Mr. Spalding on the 4th September (*Two Suffolk Friends*, p. 115): "I would not meddle with the Regatta. . . . And the Day ended by vexing me more than it did him [Newson]. . . . Posh drove in here the day before to tan his nets: could not help making one with some old friends in a Boat-race on the Monday, and getting very fuddled with them on the Suffolk Green (where I was) at night. After all the pains I have taken, and all the real anxiety I have had. And worst of all after the repeated promises he had made! I said there must be an end of Confidence between us, so far as *that* was concerned, and I would so far trouble myself about him no more. But when I came to reflect that this was but an outbreak among old friends, on an old occasion, after (I do believe) months of sobriety; that there was no concealment about it; and that though obstinate at first as to how little drunk, etc., he was very repentant

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## POSH'S SPIRIT OF INDEPENDENCE

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afterwards—I cannot let this one flaw weigh against the general good of the man. I cannot if I would: what then is the use of trying? But my confidence in that respect must be so far shaken, and it vexes me to think that I can never be sure of his not being overtaken so. I declare that it makes me feel ashamed very much to play the judge on one who stands immeasurably above me in the scale, whose faults are better than so many virtues. Was not this very outbreak that of a great genial Boy among his old Fellows? True, a Promise was broken. Yes, but if the Whole Man be of the Royal Blood of Humanity, and do Justice in the Main, what are *the people* to say? *He* thought, if he thought at all, that he kept his promise in the main. But there is no use talking, unless I part company wholly, I suppose I must take the evil with the good. . . .”

FitzGerald probably got to the very heart of the misunderstanding between him-

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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self and Posh as to the merits and demerits of "bare" when he wrote that Posh was a little obstinate as to "how little drunk," etc. Moreover he understood the nature of the man—"a great genial boy"—but he did not understand that these "great genial boys" have all the mischievous tendencies, and all the irresponsibility of real boys. He was kind and forbearing enough, God knows. But he had set up his Posh on such a pinnacle of pre-eminence over all his fellow-men that it is possible that his bitterness in discovering that after all his protégé was merely a well-built, handsome, ordinary longshoreman caused a greater revulsion than would have occurred had his first estimate of Posh's character been less exalted.

It is to the credit of the great heart of the man that he never lost his love of Posh (Posh is certain about this), though he undoubtedly did lose his confidence in and respect for him.



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## POSH'S SPIRIT OF INDEPENDENCE

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And Posh did not give way to his "guv'nor" as he might have done. That fine old East Anglian spirit of independence (which is so generally admirable) was in this particular instance sheer brutal ingratitude when shown by Posh to FitzGerald. No one has a greater admiration than I for this magnificent claim of a MAN to be MAN's equal. It kept the race of Norfolk and Suffolk longshoremen worthy of their traditions until the cockney visitors, with their tips and their hunger for longshore lies, ruined the nature of many of our beach folk. But with FitzGerald, that kind, solicitous gentleman who never asserted the claims of his station in life before an inferior, the obtrusive display of this spirit of independence was as unnecessary as it was cruel. And I think Posh understands this now. He certainly never meant to hurt the feelings of his old governor. But he chafed at the care which his friend took of him. He said to me the other day that he wished his

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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old master were alive now to take such care. "Ah!" he said, "he'd take hold o' me like this here" (and here, as I have described on a previous page, Posh pinched up his blue knitted jersey), "and say, 'Oh, my dear Poshy! Oh dear! Oh dear! To think you should be like this! Oh dear! Oh dear!'"

And Posh's old eyes will water. Indeed, I have noticed a likeness between the thoughts of Posh in reference to FitzGerald and the remorse of the son of a loving father who had tried his sire hard in lifetime and understood that he had done so after his father's death. Even now, this old man of sixty-nine leans, metaphorically, on the recollection of the man who loved him so. Even now he says, "Ah! that would ha' upset him if he'd known I should ha' come to this!"

But in 1869 Posh thought that he was a very fine fellow indeed, and was not going to be "put upon" by any "guv'nor," no matter

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## POSH'S SPIRIT OF INDEPENDENCE

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how kind the "guv'nor" had been to him. He was half owner of a fine drifter and skipper as well, to say nothing of having designed the boat. He would assert himself.

He did.

## CHAPTER XI

### POSH SHOWS TEMPER

POSH says that there “were lots o’ breezes” between him and his “guv’nor,” and when the reader of this study (who should have got to know something of FitzGerald’s attitude by now) realises this he will be able to appreciate the long-suffering generosity of this cultured scholar whom fools have painted as a mere eccentric hermit. Posh, now that he was well started by the aid of his governor, began to yearn for independence. Possibly he had some reason to complain that his sleeping partner interfered in matters of which he was ignorant. On September 21st, 1869, FitzGerald wrote to Mr. Spalding (*Two Suffolk Friends*, p. 118):—

“Posh came up with his Lugger last

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## POSH SHOWS TEMPER

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Friday, with a lot of torn nets, and went off again on Sunday. I thought he was wrong to come up, and not to transmit his nets by Rail, as is often done at 6d. a net. But I did not say so to him—it is no un-amiable point in him to love *home*: but I think he won't make a fortune by it. However, I may be very wrong in thinking he had better *not* have come. He has made about the average fishing, I believe: about £250. Some boats have £600, I hear; and some few not enough to pay their way.

“He came up with a very bad cold and hoarseness; and so went off, poor fellow: he never will be long well, I do think.”

Probably Posh knew all about the best way of making a profit out of herring drifters, and FitzGerald may have been wrong in fearing that he did not. FitzGerald, with his superb culture, may not (I do not say he did not) have understood that Posh, on his native North Sea, may

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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have been more than a match for all the culture in the world. For what I know of the old longshoreman, I am convinced that if he brought his nets home in his lugger he did so because he thought it was the most profitable way of bringing them back. But FitzGerald grew anxious, and his anxiety was not understood by the natural child of the beach, and caused friction and mutual irritation.

But this did not break out till the north voyage was over and the *Meum* and *Tuum* had been on the home fishing for more than a month. Then Posh began to have the fingering of a good deal of money, and FitzGerald had already had reason to doubt his abilities to keep his credit and debit sides of account in proper order. Moreover, the usual autumn gales had been bringing the stormy and dark nights which are as profitable as they are dangerous to the drifters. On Monday, November 1st, 1869 (one of the few letters of FitzGerald's

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## POSH SHOWS TEMPER

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which I have seen completely dated), the sleeping partner wrote on a sheet of paper headed by a monogram which is "S.W. & B." so far as I can make out. To make up for the fullness of the date there is no address.

"I cannot lay blame to myself, Posh, in this matter, though I may not have known you were so busy with the boat as you tell me. Hearing of great disasters by last week's gale, I was, as usual, anxious about you. Hearing nothing from you, I telegram'd on Thursday Afternoon to Mr. Bradbeer: his answer reached me at 5 p.m. that you had come in on Tuesday, and were then safe in harbour. Being then afraid lest you should put off paying away the money, which, as I told you, was a positive *danger* to Wife and Children, I directly telegram'd to *you* to do what I had desired you to do the week before. Busy as you were, five minutes spent in writing me a

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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line would have spared all this trouble and all this vexation on both sides.

"As to my telegrams telling all the world what you wish to keep secret; how did they do that? My telegrams to Mr. Bradbeer were simply to ask if you were *safe*. My telegram to you was simply to say, 'Do what I bid you'; Who should know *what* that was, or that it had anything to do with paying the Boat's Bills? People might guess it had *something* to do with the Boat: and don't you suppose that every one knows pretty well how things are between us? And why should they not, I say, when all is honestly done between us? The Custom House people must know (and, of course, tell others) that you are at present only Half-owner; and would suppose that *I*, the other Half, would use some Authority in the matter.

"You say truly that, when we began together, you supposed I should leave all to you, and use *no* Authority (though you



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## POSH SHOWS TEMPER

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have always asked me about anything you wished done). Quite true. I never did wish to meddle; nor did I call on you for any Account, till I saw last year that you forgot a really important sum, and that you did not seem inclined to help your Memory (as every one else does) by writing it down in a Book. In two cases this year I have shown you the same forgetfulness (about your liabilities I mean) and I do not think I have been unjust, or unkind, in trying to make you bring *yourself* to Account. You know, and ought to believe, that I have perfect confidence in *your honour*; and have told you of the one defect I observed in you as much for your sake as mine.

“*Quite as much*, yes! For the anxiety I have . . . [word illegible] [? suffered] these two years about your eleven lives is but ill compensated by all these squalls between us two; which I declare I excuse myself of raising. If, in this last case, you really had not time to post me a line or two to

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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say you were all safe, and that you had done what I desired you to do ; I am very sorry for having written so sharply as I did to you : but I cannot *blame* myself for the mistake. No : this I will say : I am not apt to think too much of my doings, and dealings with others. But, in my whole sixty years, I can with a clear conscience say that I have dealt with *one man* fairly, kindly, and not ungenerously, for three good years. I may have made mistakes ; but I can say I have done *my* best as conscientiously as he can say he has done his. And I believe he *has* done his best, though he has also made mistakes ; and I remain his sincerely,

“E. FG.”

Mr. Bradbeer was a herring merchant, and his family is still prominent in the fishing industry of Lowestoft. Posh's letter, to which the above is a reply, must have been very characteristic of his race, to which secrecy concerning their private

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## POSH SHOWS TEMPER

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affairs is a first nature. The mistrust of the privacy of the "telegrams" may possibly have had some justification. Even in these days there are East Anglian villages where the contents of private telegrams are sometimes known to the village before the actual information reaches the addressee. And in 1869 Lowestoft was not much more than a village, and telegraphy was in its infancy. Possibly Posh exaggerated the importance of secretiveness, and FitzGerald the security of privacy. But apart from all questions of "the rights of the matter," what a letter it is! What a splendid justification for almost any action. I fear, however the matter in dispute be looked at, Posh cannot have the best of it in this case. He had fired up at an imaginary slight, wrong, whatever he chose to think it, and if he has any excuse at all, it is that, but for his unreasonableness, we should not have this letter.

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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One would have thought that it might have given Posh pause if even he felt disposed to show his independence again. But this "squall" between these two curious partners was not destined to be the last. For the time it blew over, and the mutual relations between Posh and his "guv'nor" were as friendly as ever.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE *HENRIETTA*

DURING the winter of 1869-70 it seems that Posh conceived the idea that the capital of the firm of FitzGerald and Fletcher justified the working partner in increasing the stock-in-trade. A boat-building company at Southwold put up some craft at auction, and among them was one which had already seen a good deal of sea service named the *Henrietta*. This Posh bought for about £100 without consulting his partner. It transpired afterwards that the sale was not acceptable to all the shareholders of the company that owned the boat, especially to a Jerry Cole, one of the principal shareholders, and there was a good deal of bother for Posh in obtaining delivery of his purchase. It may be as well

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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to include all the letters relating to this transaction in one chapter without regard to dates.

The first is dated February 1st—that is to say, February 1st, 1870—and was written at Woodbridge by FitzGerald to his partner. The letter, as handed to me by Posh, was incomplete, and lacked signature. No doubt the second sheet had been lost with those "sackfuls."

"WOODBRIDGE, *February 1st.*

"MY DEAR POSH,

"Mr. Spalding was with me last night; and I asked him if I was justified in the scolding I gave you about buying the Ligger and Nets too; telling him the particulars. He would not go so far as to say I was *wrong*; but he thought that you were not to blame either. Therefore I consider that I *was* wrong; and, as I told you, I am very glad to find myself wrong, though very sorry to have been so: and I cannot let a day pass without writing to say so.

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## THE HENRIETTA

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You may think that I had better have said nothing to anybody about it : but I always do ask of another if I am right, If Mr. Spalding had been at Lowestoft at the time all this would not have happened : as it *has* happened, I wish to take all the blame on myself.

“All this will make you wish the more to be quit of such a *Partner*. I am sure, however, that I *thought* myself right : and am glad to recant. Perhaps another *Partner* would not do so much : but you say you will not have another.

“Mr. Spalding thinks you would have done better to stick to *one* Lugger, considering the double trouble of two. But he says he is not a proper judge. *I* think the chief evil is that this new Boat will keep you ashore in the Net-room, which I am persuaded hurts you. I told you I was sure the *Dust* of the nets hurt you : and (oddly enough) the first thing I saw, on opening a Paper here on my return, was a

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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Report on the influence of *Dust* in causing Disease. I hope you have seen the Doctor and told him all—about last Summer's Illness. Let me hear what he says. I should have advised *Worthington*, but he is very expensive. One thing I am sure of: *the more you eat, and the less you drink, the better.*"

Even here, when Posh had obviously gone beyond his rights and bought another boat without consultation with his capitalist partner, FitzGerald shows his anxiety and solicitude for the man.

There *is* a good deal of dust flying about the net chambers; for the cutch and oil and thread all shred off and poison the air. "Why," said Posh the other day, "he bought me one o' them things that goo oover the mouth" (a respirator), "but lor! I should ha' been ashamed ta be seed a wearin' on it!"

Dr. Worthington referred to in the letter



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## THE HENRIETTA

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is one of a long line of medical practitioners, and was the Lowestoft medical attendant of FitzGerald himself. I have experienced great kindness from both this Dr. Worthington and his son Dr. Dick Worthington. The former tells me that FitzGerald would never enter his house, but would stand on the doorstep to consult. He had no objection to the doctor entering his (FitzGerald's) lodgings, and on one occasion when Dr. Worthington called on him at 12 Marine Terrace the doctor saw all his medicine bottles unopened in a row. "You know this isn't fair to me," said the justly irritated doctor. "I do what I can for you, and you won't take my medicines." "My dear doctor," said FitzGerald, "it does me good to see you."

Dr. Aldis Wright says that this is merely an instance of FitzGerald's rule that he would never enter the house of his equal. Of course his "social" equal is inferred, for

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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the rule would have been unnecessary if the "equal" bore another significance. His inferiors in station he would visit and charm by his manner and speech. But the house of a society equal he avoided, lest he should be compelled, for mere courtesy, to go where he would not.

I have, of course, chuckled over the opinion that Dr. Worthington senior was "very expensive." But I believe that Fitzgerald was one of those (I might almost say "of us") who regarded all doctor's bills as luxuries! At all events, if Fitzgerald was right, I can say that Dr. Dick Worthington is not atavistic in this particular!

Mr. Spalding's opinion inclined Fitzgerald to make no difficulty about finding the money for the *Henrietta*. He lodged it at his bankers' for Posh to draw when occasion required. But Posh seems to have been a little in advance. There is no heading whatever to the following letter.

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## THE HENRIETTA

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“DEAR POSH,

“I don’t understand your letter. That which I had on *Friday*, enclosing Mr. Craigie’s, said that you had not *drawn* the money, your letter of *To-day* tells me that you *had* drawn the money, *before the Letter from Southwold* came. Was not that letter Mr. Craigie’s letter?

“Anyhow, I think you ought not (after all I have said) to have drawn the money (to keep in your house) till you wanted it. And you could have got it at the Bank *any* morning on which you got *another* letter from Southwold, telling you the business was to be settled.

“Moreover, I think you should have written me on *Saturday*, in answer to my letter. You are very good in attending to any letters of mine about stores, or fish, which I don’t care about. But you somehow do not attend so regularly to things which I *do* care about, such as gales of wind in which you are out, and such directions as

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EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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I have given over and over again about money matters.

"However, I don't mean to kick up another row ; provided you *now* do, and at once, what I positively desire.

"Which is ; to take the money directly to Mr. Barnard, and ask him, as from *me*, to pay it to my account at Messrs. Bacon and Cobbold's Bank at Woodbridge. Then if you tell me the address of the Auctioneer or Agent, at Southwold who manage [*sic*] the business, Bacon and Cobbold will write to them at *once* that the money is ready for them directly the Lugger is ready for you. And, write me a line to-morrow to say that this is done.

"This makes a trouble to you, and to me, and to Bankers, but I think you must blame yourself for not attending to my directions. But I am yours not the less. "E. FG."

Mr. Craigie was an old Southwold friend of the Fletcher family, with whom Fletcher

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## THE *HENRIETTA*

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senior (Posh's father) had spent Christmas for over forty years. The criticism of Posh's system appears, to the impartial critic, to be both painful and true. But Posh, in this case, was not altogether to blame. This Mr. Jerry Cole, before mentioned, was keeping things back. He had a preponderating interest in that Southwold company, and he thought that the *Henrietta* had been sold too cheap, and that hung up the delivery. At least that's what Posh tells me, and at this date I can't get any better evidence than his.

Shortly after the last letter FitzGerald wrote again. Now his kind anxiety about this man, whom he still loved, outweighed all thought of money. It was a bitter winter, and Posh, he thought, was not over-hale.

“WOODBRIDGE, *Saturday*.

“DEAR CAPTAIN,

“Whatever is to be done about the money, do not you go over to Southwold

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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while this weather lasts. I think it is colder than I ever knew. Don't go, I say—there can be no hurry for the boat (even if you *can* get it) for a a [*sic*] week or so. Perhaps it may be as well at Southwold as at Lowestoft.

"I wish you were here to play Allfours with me To-night.

"Yours,

"E. FG."

Posh got the lugger in March, 1870, and on March 2nd FitzGerald wrote to Mr. Spalding (*Two Suffolk Friends*, p. 118): "Posh has, I believe, gone off to Southwold in hope to bring his Lugger home. I advised him last night to ascertain first by letter whether she *were* ready for his hands; but you know he will go his own way, and that generally is as good as anybody's. He now works all day in his Net-loft: and I wonder how he keeps as well as he is, shut up there from fresh air and among frowsy Nets. . . . I think he has mistaken in not sending the *Meum* and *Tuum* to the West this

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## THE *HENRIETTA*

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spring. . . . But I have not meddled, nor indeed is it my Business to meddle now. . . .”

I think this must have been written about the date of the letter with which I commence the next chapter, or possibly a little later. It would, almost certainly, be *after* the catches of mackerel mentioned by “Mr. Manby” as hereinafter appears, and, very likely, after the termination of the partnership.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE END OF THE PARTNERSHIP

**E**ITHER in March or April, 1870, Fitzgerald wrote to Posh the quaint letter which follows:—

“DEAR POSH,

“I never wanted you to puzzle yourself about the Accounts any more, but only to tell me at a rough estimate what the chief expenses were—as, for instance, Shares, &c.—I beg to say that I *never had* asked you—nor had you told me this at Lowestoft: if you had I should not have wanted to ask again. And my reason *for* asking, was simply that, on Monday Mr. Moor here was *asking me* about what a Lugger’s expenses were, and I felt it silly not to be able to tell him the least about it: and I







THE "BOAT INN," QUAY LANE, WOODBRIDGE

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## THE END OF THE PARTNERSHIP

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have felt so when some one asked me before: and that is why I asked you. I neither have, nor ever had, any doubt of your doing your best: and you ought not to think so.

“You must *please yourself* entirely about Plymouth: I only wish to say that I had not spoken as if I wanted you to go. Go by all means if you like.

“When I paid the Landlady of the Boat Inn for Newson and Jack she asked me if you had explained to me about the Grog business. I said that you could not understand it at first, but afterwards supposed that others might have been treated at night. She said—Yes; drinking rum-flip till two in the morning. She says it was Newson’s doing, but I think *you* should have told me *at once*, particularly as your not doing so left me with some suspicion of the Landlady’s fair dealing. You did not choose to leave the blame to Newson, I suppose, but I think I deserve the truth

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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at your hands as much as he does the concealment of it.

"Yours,

"E. FG."

Mr. Moor was FitzGerald's Woodbridge lawyer, and no doubt he and other friends of FitzGerald thought that the affairs of the partnership of FitzGerald and Fletcher were not carried on with such precision as was desirable. Possibly they were right. But then, Posh couldn't be precise. I have failed to get any intelligible account out of Posh as to that rum-flip orgy. All he could do was to chuckle. The question of loyalty raised in the letter is a nice one. But Posh and his kind would only answer it in one way. They would regard it as treachery to their order to betray each other to a "gennleman," however kind the "gennleman," may have been.

On April 4th FitzGerald wrote to Posh from Woodbridge:—

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## THE END OF THE PARTNERSHIP

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“DEAR POSH,

“I *may be* at Lowestoft some time next week. As it is I have still some engagements here ; and, moreover, I have not been quite well.

“If you want to see me, you have only to come over here any day you choose. To-morrow (Sunday) there is a Train from Lowestoft which reaches Woodbridge at about 3 in the afternoon. I tell you this in case you might want to see or speak to me.

“Mr. Manby told me yesterday that there was a wonderful catch of Mackerel down in the West. I have no doubt that this warm weather and fine nights has to do with it. I believe that we are in for a spell of such weather :—but I suppose you have no thought of going Westward now.

“I have desired that a . . . [word missing] of the Green Paint which Mr. Silver used should be sent to you. But do not you *wait* for it, if you want to be about the Lugger

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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at once. The paint *will keep* for another time: and I suppose that the sooner the Lugger is afloat this hot and dry weather the better.

“ Remember me to your Family.

“ Yours always,

“ E. FG.”

Mr. Manby has been already mentioned, and we have previously heard of the excellence of Mr. Silver's green paint. But this letter must have been almost the last written by the sleeping partner before the termination of the partnership; for on April the 12th Mr. W. T. Balls, of Lowestoft, valued the *Meum and Tuum*, and “Herring and Mackerel Nets, Bowls, Warpropes, Ballast, and miscellaneous Fishing Stock belonging jointly to Edward FitzGerald and Joseph Fletcher.”

FitzGerald had started Posh, put him on his legs, and, as he believed, given him a chance to become a successful “owner.”

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## THE END OF THE PARTNERSHIP

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But the poet was weary of the partnership. He had found it impossible to persuade Posh to keep accounts such as should be kept in every business, and had been disappointed more than once by the intemperance of the man. But as yet the kindly, generous-hearted gentleman had no thought of breaking with his protégé altogether, or of depriving him of the use of the *Meum* and *Tuum* or *Henrietta*, both of which had been bought with his, FitzGerald's, money. But he would no longer be a partner. So Mr. Balls was called in to value the stock-in-trade, with a view to arranging that a bill of sale for the half-value to which FitzGerald was entitled should be given him, and that Posh should thereafter carry on the business of a herring-boat owner by himself, subject to the charge in favour of his old "guv'nor."

Despite the various "squalls," there had, as yet, been no serious quarrel between these two. Indeed, FitzGerald's kind heart

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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never forgot Posh, and the fascination of the man. But for the future FitzGerald and Posh were no longer partners. FitzGerald's experience as a "herring merchant" was at an end.



## CHAPTER XIV

### POSH'S PORTRAIT

PREVIOUSLY to the termination of the partnership FitzGerald had commissioned S. Laurence to paint a portrait of Posh. On the 13th January, 1870, he wrote to Laurence from Woodbridge (*Letters*, II, 113, Eversley Edition):—

“ . . . If you were down here, I think I should make you take a life-size Oil Sketch of the Head and Shoulders of my Captain of the Lugger. You see by the enclosed ” (a copy of the photograph of 1870, no doubt) “ that these are neither of them a bad sort: and the Man’s Soul is every way as well proportioned, missing in nothing that may become a Man, as I believe. He and I will, I doubt, part Company; well as he

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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likes me, which is perhaps as well as a sailor cares for any one but Wife and Children: he likes to be, what he is born to be, his own sole Master, of himself, and of other men. So now I have got him a fair start, I think he will carry on the Lugger alone: I shall miss my Hobby, which is no doubt the last I shall ride in this world: but I shall also get eased of some Anxiety about the lives of a Crew for which I now feel responsible. . . ."

On January 20th FitzGerald wrote another letter to Laurence on the same subject.

". . . I should certainly like a large Oil-sketch like Thackeray's, done in your most hasty, and worst, style, to hang up with Thackeray and Tennyson, with whom he shares a certain Grandeur of Soul and Body. As you guess, the colouring is (when the Man is all well) the finest Saxon type: with that complexion which Mon-

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## POSH'S PORTRAIT

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taigne calls 'vif, Mâle, et flamboyant'; blue eyes; and strictly auburn hair, that any woman might sigh to possess. He says it is coming off, as it sometimes does from those who are constantly wearing the close, hot Sou'-westers. We must see what can be done about a Sketch" (*Letters*, II, 115, Eversley Edition).

In February of the same year Fitzgerald went down to Lowestoft, and wrote another letter from there with reference to the proposed portrait (*Letters*, II, 115, Eversley Edition). It is obvious from these letters that there was no bitterness on his side which led to the ending of the partnership. His long-suffering endured to the last.

"MY DEAR LAURENCE,

"... I came here a few days ago, for the benefit of my old Doctor, The Sea, and my Captain's Company, which is as good.

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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He has not yet got his new Lugger home ; but will do so this week, I hope ; and then the way for us will be somewhat clearer.

“ If you sketch a head, you might send it down to me to look at, so as I might be able to guess if there were any likelihood in that way of proceeding. Merely the Lines of Feature indicated, even by Chalk, might do. As I told you, the Head is of the large type, or size, the proper Capital of a six-foot Body, of the broad dimensions you see in the Photograph. The fine shape of the Nose, less than Roman, and more than Greek, scarce appears in the Photograph ; the Eye, and its delicate Eyelash, of course will remain to be made out ; and I think you excel in the Eye.

“ When I get home (which I shall do this week) I will send you two little Papers about the Sea words and Phrases used hereabout, for which this Man (quite unconsciously) is my main Authority. You will





LITTLE GRANGE

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## POSH'S PORTRAIT

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see in them a little of his simplicity of Soul; but not the Justice of Thought, Tenderness of Nature, and all other good Gifts which make him a Gentleman of Nature's grandest Type."

The new Lugger was, of course, the *Henrietta*. The portrait was, according to Posh, painted during the summer at Little Grange, the house which FitzGerald built for himself, or rather altered for himself, at Woodbridge. Dr. Aldis Wright was under the impression that the portrait was never finished; but Posh is very certain about it. "I mind settin' as still as a cat at a mouse-hole," says he, "for ten min't or a quarter of an hour at a time, on and off, and then a stretchin' o' my legs in the yard. Ah! I was somethin' glad when that wuz finished, that I was! Tired! Lor! I niver knowed as dewin' narthen' would tire ye like that. The picter was sold at Mr. FitzGerald's sale, and bought by Billy Hynes o' Bury St. Edmunds. He

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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kep' a public there. I reckon he's dead by now."

Up to the date of going to press I have been unable to trace this portrait, and it is, of course, possible, that in spite of Posh's vivid recollection, Dr. Aldis Wright's impression may be the right one.

A letter to Laurence of August 2nd, 1870, corroborates Posh to the extent of proving that the painter had certainly seen the fisherman. On that date FitzGerald wrote (*Letters*, II, 118, Eversley Edition):—

"... The Lugger is now preparing in the Harbour beside me ; the Captain here, there, and everywhere ; with a word for no one but on business ; the other side of the Man you saw looking for Birds' Nests : all things in their season. I am sure the Man is fit to be King of a Kingdom as well as of a Lugger. . . .

"I declare, you and I have seen A Man ! Have we not ? Made in the mould of what



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## POSH'S PORTRAIT

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Humanity should be, Body and Soul, a poor Fisherman. The proud Fellow had better have kept me for a Partner in some of his responsibilities. But no; he must rule alone, as is right he should too. . . .”

Yes. It would certainly have been better for Posh if he had kept his “guv’nor” for a partner. But the “squalls,” the occasional beer bouts (or “settin’ ins,” as they call them in East Anglia), had excited the spirit of independence of my gentleman. Possibly FitzGerald himself had, by too open a display of his admiration for his partner, this typical longshoreman, contributed to the personal self-satisfaction which must have been at the bottom of the man’s reasons for wishing to be free of one who had befriended him so delicately and so generously. Posh himself admits, or rather boasts, that the “break” was owing to his own action. From first to last it seems that FitzGerald, the cultured gentleman, the scholar, the poet

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & “POSH”

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of perfect language and profound philosophy, regarded Posh as almost more than man—certainly as more than average man—and there can be no greater token of the sweet simplicity of the scholar.

## CHAPTER XV

### A DROP O' BARE

IN September, 1870 (which would be just before the home voyage began and after the Northern voyage was over), Posh seems to have "celebrated" more than his whilome partner and then mortgagee thought proper. On the 8th of the month FitzGerald wrote to Mr. Spalding (*Two Suffolk Friends*, p. 119):—

" . . . I had a letter from Posh yesterday, telling me he was sorry we had not 'parted Friends.' That he had been indeed '*a little the worse* for Drink'—which means being at a Public-house half the Day, and having to sleep it off the remainder: having been duly warned by his Father at Noon that all had been ready for sailing 2 hours before, and all the other Luggers gone. As

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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Posh could *walk*, I suppose he only acknowledges a *little* Drink ; but, judging by what followed on that little Drink, I wish he had simply acknowledged his Fault. He begs me to write : if I do so I must speak very plainly to him : that, with all his noble Qualities, I doubt I can never again have Confidence in his Promise to break this one bad Habit, seeing that He has broken it so soon, when there was no occasion or excuse : unless it were the thought of leaving his Wife so ill at home. The Man is so beyond others, as I think, that I have come to feel that I must not condemn him by general rule ; nevertheless, if he ask me, I can refer him to no other. I must send him back his own written Promise of Sobriety, signed only a month before he broke it so needlessly : and I must even tell him that I know not yet if he can be left with the Mortgage as we settled it in May. . . .

"P.S.—I enclose Posh's letter, and the answer I propose to give to it. I am sure

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## A DROP O' BARE

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it makes me sad and ashamed to be setting up for Judge on a much nobler Creature than myself. . . . I had thought of returning him his written Promise as worthless: desiring back my direction to my Heirs that he should keep on the Lugger in case of my Death. . . . I think Posh ought to be made to feel this severely: and, as his Wife is better I do not mind making him feel it if I can. On the other hand, I do not wish to drive Him, by Despair, into the very fault which I have so tried to cure him of. . . .”

His mother did not try to excuse him at all: his father would not even see him go off. She merely told me parenthetically, “I tell him he seem to do it when the Governor is here.”

If FitzGerald had not set poor Posh (for in a way I am sorry for the old fellow) on a pedestal, he would have understood that to a longshoreman or herring fisher who drinks

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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it (there are many teetotallers now), "bare" can never be regarded as an enemy. Posh did not think any excuse was necessary for having had, perhaps, more than he could conveniently carry. It was his last day ashore (though I can't quite understand what fishing he was going on unless the herring came down earlier than they do now), and he was "injin' of hisself." In the old days they took a cask or so aboard. This is never done now, and the chief drink aboard is cocoa (pronounced, as FitzGerald writes, "cuckoo"). Posh no doubt thought himself hard done by that such a fuss should have been made about a "drarp o' bare." He doubtless wished that FitzGerald should forgive him. For, despite his conduct, he did, I truly believe, love his "guv'nor." As for the father and mother, well, they smoothed down the "gennleman" and sympathised with their son according to their kind and to mother nature. The Direction to FitzGerald's Heirs, which he

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## A DROP O' BARE

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refers to, is still in existence, and reads as follows:—

“LOWESTOFT, *January 20th*, 1870.

“I hereby desire my Heirs executors and Assigns not to call in the Principal of any Mortgage by which Joseph Fletcher the younger of Lowestoft stands indebted to me; provided he duly pays the Interest thereon; does his best to pay off the Principal; and does his best also to keep up the value of the Property so mortgaged until he pays it off.

“This I hereby desire and enjoin on my heirs executors or assigns solemnly as any provision made by Word or Deed while . . . [word missing] any other legal document.

“EDWARD FITZGERALD.”

This solemn injunction was written on a sheet of note-paper, and in the fold, over a sixpenny stamp, FitzGerald wrote: “This paper I now endorse again on legal stamp,

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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so as to give it the authority I can. Edward FitzGerald, July 31, 1870."

Surely never man had so kind and considerate a friend as Posh had in FitzGerald!



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE SALE OF THE *SCANDAL*

THOUGH the partnership was over, FitzGerald by no means gave up his friendship for Posh. From time to time he saw him, and from time to time he wrote to him, and always he retained the affection for the longshoreman which had sprung up in him so suddenly and (I fear) so unaccountably.

On February 5th, 1871, FitzGerald wrote to Mr. Spalding (*Two Suffolk Friends*, p. 121) :—

“ . . . Posh and his Father are very busy getting the *Meum and Tuum* ready for the West ; Jemmy, who goes Captain, is just now in France with a *Cargoe* of salt Herrings. I suppose the Lugger will start in a fortnight or so. . . . All-fours at night.”

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EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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In April of the same year FitzGerald wrote to Posh:—

“WOODBRIDGE, *Monday*.

“DEAR POSH,

“Come any day you please. The Horse Fair is on Friday, you had better come, at any rate; by Thursday, so as to catch the Market. For I think your Lugger must have got away before that.

“A letter written by Ablett Pasefield [otherwise called Percival] yesterday tells me there are four Lowestoft Luggers in Weymouth. I fancy that even if they were on the Fishing ground, the wind must be too strong to be at work.

“It was Mr. Kerrich who died suddenly this day week—and I suppose is being buried this very day.

“Yours,           E. FG.

“Mr. Berry tells me that the Poultry Show here is on Thursday. You can, as I say, come any Day you please. I see the





GELDESTON HALL, THE NORFOLK SEAT OF THE KERRICH FAMILY

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## THE SALE OF THE *SCANDAL*

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Wind is got West, after the squalls of Hail."

Ablett Pasefield (or Percival), the fisherman and yacht hand, has been mentioned before, and will be mentioned again. He was one of FitzGerald's favourites. Mr. Kerrich was FitzGerald's brother-in-law, the husband of the poet's favourite sister, who had predeceased him in 1863. On August 5th in that year FitzGerald wrote to Professor Cowell (*Letters*, II, 46, Eversley Edition): "... I have lost my sister Kerrich, the only one of my family I much cared for, or who much cared for me."

Mr. Kerrich lived at Geldeston Hall, near Beccles, which is still in possession of the same family.

Mr. Berry (as we know) was FitzGerald's landlord at Markethill, Woodbridge.

At this time Posh was a man of means, and drove his smart gig and mare, and it was with some idea of buying a new horse

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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that he was to go to Woodbridge Horse Fair. In the seventies the horse fairs of Norwich and other East Anglian towns were important functions. The Rommany gryengroes had not then all gone to America, and those who know their George Borrow will remember with delight his description of the scene at the horse fair on Norwich Castle Hill, when Jasper Petulengro first brought himself to the recollection of Lavengro (or the "sap-engro") as his "pal"—that memorable day when George Borrow saw the famous entire Norfolk cob Marshland Shales led amongst bared heads, blind and grey with age, but triumphant in his unequalled fame (*Lavengro*, p. 74, Minerva Edition).

But Posh bought no new horse. And his recollection does not permit of any trustworthy account of his visit.

Perhaps it was during this trip to Woodbridge (and the carping reader will be justified in saying "and perhaps it wasn't") that

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## THE SALE OF THE *SCANDAL*

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Posh witnessed the curious and characteristic meeting between FitzGerald and his wife.

If this meeting were characteristic, still more so was the history of the marriage.

FitzGerald had been a great friend of Bernard Barton, the Woodbridge quaker poet, and on the death of his friend he wished to save Miss Barton from being thrown on the world almost destitute and almost friendless. The only way of doing it without creating scandal (and he changed the name of his yacht from the *Shamrock* to the *Scandal* because he said that scandal was the principal commodity of Woodbridge) was to make her his wife. This he did. But there were many reasons why the marriage was not likely to prove a happy one. It did not, and both parties recognised that the wisest thing to do was to separate without any unnecessary fuss. They did so. And no doubt their action proved to be for the happiness of each of them.

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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Posh was walking with FitzGerald on one occasion down Quay Lane, Woodbridge, when Mrs. FitzGerald (who was living at Gorleston at the time, but had gone over to Woodbridge, possibly to see some old friends) appeared walking towards them. FitzGerald removed the glove he was wearing on his right hand. Mrs. FitzGerald removed the glove she was wearing on her right hand. There was a momentary hesitation as the husband passed the wife. But Posh thinks that the two hands did not meet. FitzGerald bowed with all his courtesy, and passed on.

Posh says that Mrs. FitzGerald was a "fine figure of a woman." And I believe that she was, indeed, so fine a figure of a woman that the length of her stride excited the admiration of the local schoolboys when she was still Miss Barton. She was older than FitzGerald when he married her, and both were nearer fifty than forty.

In this context I give the following letter



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## THE SALE OF THE *SCANDAL*

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from FitzGerald to Posh, though I have been unable to fix its date with any certainty.

“WOODBRIDGE, *Tuesday*.

“DEAR POSH,

“I find that I may very likely have to go to London on Thursday—not to be home till Friday perhaps. If I do this it will be scarce worth while your coming over here to-morrow, so far as *I* am concerned; though you will perhaps see Newson.

“Poor young Smith of the Sportsman was brought home ill last week, and died of the very worst Small Pox in a Day or two. There have been *three* Deaths from it here: all from London. As young Smith died in *Quay Lane* leading down to the Boat Inn, I should not like you to be about there with any chance of Danger, though I have been up and down several times myself.

“Ever yours,

“E. FG.”

“‘The Sportsman’ was a public-house at

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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Woodbridge, and it is probable that Fitzgerald had helped "poor young Smith" substantially. His anxiety lest Posh should contract smallpox, and his indifference as to himself, are admirably illustrative of the man's unselfishness.

But now that the partnership was at an end he began to frequent Lowestoft less. During 1871 he sold the *Scandal*, and on September 4th he wrote to Dr. Aldis Wright from Woodbridge (*Letters*, II, p. 126, Eversley Edition): "I run over to Lowestoft occasionally for a few days, but do not abide there long: no longer having my dear little Ship for company. . . ."

Who bought the *Scandal* I do not know. Posh has no recollection, and Dr. Aldis Wright has been unable to trace with certainty the subsequent owner of her, though he has reason to think that she was sold to Sir Cuthbert Quilter. She had served her purpose. She was, as Posh assures me, a "fast and handy little schooner."

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## THE SALE OF THE *SCANDAL*

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After her sale FitzGerald still remained the mortgagee of the *Meum and Tuum* and the *Henrietta*. But this was not to last indefinitely. Posh's spirit of independence and love of "bare" were fated to put an end to all business relations between his old "guv'nor" and him.

## CHAPTER XVII

### BY ORDER OF THE MORTGAGEE

MATTERS were still progressing fairly satisfactorily when FitzGerald visited Lowestoft in September, 1872. On the 29th of that month he wrote to Mr. Spalding (*Two Suffolk Friends*, p. 122) :—

“ . . . Posh—after no fish caught for 3 weeks—has had his boat come home with nearly all her fleet of nets torn to pieces in last week’s winds. . . . he . . . went with me to the theatre afterwards, where he admired the ‘Gays,’ as he called the Scenes ; but fell asleep before Shylock had whetted his knife in the Merchant of Venice. . . . ”

“Gays” is East Anglian for pictures.

Towards the end of 1873 relations began to be severely strained between mortgagor

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BY ORDER OF THE MORTGAGEE

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and mortgagee. On December the 31st FitzGerald wrote from 12 Marine Terrace, Lowestoft :—

“12 MARINE TERRACE,

“*December 31.*

“JOSEPH FLETCHER,

“As you cannot talk with me without confusion, I write a few words to you on the subject of the two grievances which you began about this morning.

“1st. As to your being *under* your Father: I said no such thing: but wrote that he was to be *either* Partner, or (with your Mother) constantly employed, and consulted with as to the Boats. It is indeed for *their* sakes, and that of your own Family, that I have come to take all this trouble

“2ndly. As to the Bill of Sale to me. If you could be calm enough, you would see that this would be a Protection *to yourself*. You do not pay your different Creditors *all* their Bill at the year's end. Now, if

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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any one of these should happen to want *all* his Money ; he might, by filing a Bankruptcy against you, seize upon your Nets and everything else you have to pay his Debt.

“As to your supposing that *I* should use the Bill of Sale except in the last necessity (which I do not calculate upon), you prove that you can have but little remembrance of what I have hitherto done for you and am still willing to do for your Family’s sake quite as much as for your own.

“The Nets were included in the Valuation which Mr. Balls made of the whole Property ; which valuation (as you ought to remember) I reduced even lower than Mr. Balls’ Valuation ; which you yourself thought too low at the time. Therefore (however much the Nets, &c. may have been added to since) surely *I* have the first claim on them in Justice, if not by the Mortgage. I repeat, however, that I proposed the Bill of Sale quite as much as a

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## BY ORDER OF THE MORTGAGEE

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Protection to yourself and yours as to myself.

“If you cannot see all this on reflection, there is no use my talking or writing more about it. You may ask Mr. Barnard, if you please, or any such competent person, if *they* object to the Bill of Sale, I shall not insist. But you had better let me know what you decide on before the end of the week when I shall be going home, that I may arrange accordingly.

“EDWARD FITZGERALD.”

Mr. Barnard was a Lowestoft lawyer for whom Posh had no great love. It is hardly necessary to say that he did not “ask” him. He still raises his voice and gets excited when he discusses the grievances of which he made complaint in the winter of 1873. “He wouldn’t leave me alone,” says Posh. “It was ‘yew must ax yar faa’er this, an’ yew must let yar mother that, and yew mustn’t dew this here, nor yit that theer.’

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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At last I up an' says, 'Theer! I ha' paid ivery farden o' debts. Look a here. Here be the receipts. Now I'll ha'e no more on it.' And I slammed my fist down like this here."

(Posh's fist came down on my Remington's table till the bell jangled!)

"'Oh dear! oh dear, Posh!' says he. 'That it should ever come ta this! And hev yew anything left oover?'

"'Yes,' I say. 'I've got a matter of a hunnerd an' four pound clear arter payin' ivery farden owin', an' the stock an' nets an' gear and tew boots<sup>1</sup> an' all wha'ss mortgaged ta yew. Now I'll ha'e no more on't. Ayther I'm master or I ha' done wi't.'

"'Oh dear! oh dear! Posh,' he say, 'I din't think as yew'd made so much.'"

That is Posh's account of the final disagreement which led to the sale of the boats in 1874. Even if it be true one cannot say that the bluff independence came off with flying colours in this particular instance.

<sup>1</sup> In East Anglia "boat" is pronounced to rhyme with "foot."



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## BY ORDER OF THE MORTGAGEE

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But FitzGerald could have told another story, if one may judge from his letter to Mr. Spalding of the 9th January, 1874, written from Lowestoft (*Two Suffolk Friends*, p. 123):—

“ . . . I have seen no more of Fletcher since I wrote, though he called once when I was out. . . . I only hope he has taken no desperate step. I hope so for his Family’s sake, including Father and Mother. People here have asked me if he is not going to give up the business, &c. Yet there is Greatness about the Man. I believe his want of Conscience in some particulars is to be referred to his *Salwaging* Ethics; and your Cromwells, Cæsars, and Napoleons have not been more scrupulous. But I shall part Company with him if I can do so without Injury to his Family. If not I must let him go on *under some ‘Surveillance’*: he *must* wish to get rid of me also, and (I believe, though he says *not*) of the Boat, if he could better himself.”

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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Posh's story is that after the letter of December 31st, 1873, FitzGerald tried to find him. He went to his father's house, and (says Posh, which we are at liberty to doubt) "cried like a child." He sent Posh a paper of conditions which must be agreed to if he, Posh, were to continue to have the use of the *Meum* and *Tuum* and the *Henrietta*. The last one was (Posh says, with a roar of indignation), "that the said Joseph Fletcher the younger shall be a teetotaller!"

"Lor'!" says Posh, "how my father did swear at him when I told him o' that!"

No doubt he did. And no doubt in the presence of FitzGerald the "slim" old Lowestoft longshoreman raised his mighty voice in wrath and indignation that he should have begotten a son to disgrace him so cruelly! FitzGerald was too open a man, too honest-hearted, too straightforward to understand that a father could encourage his son insidiously, and swear at him, Fitz-

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## BY ORDER OF THE MORTGAGEE

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Gerald, at the same time as he deprecated that son's conduct. But FitzGerald's eyes, long closed by kindness, were partly open at last. He would not go on without some better guarantee of conduct, some better security that the boats' debts would be paid. On January 19th, 1874, he wrote to Posh (and the handwriting of the letter suggests disturbance of mind) from Woodbridge:—

“I forgot to say, Fletcher, that I shall pay for any work done to my two Boats, in case that you get another Boat to employ the Nets in. That you *should* get such another Boat, is, I am quite sure, the best plan for you and for me also. As I wrote you before, I shall make over to you all my Right to the Nets on condition that you use them, or change them for others to be used, in the Herring Fishing, in any other Boat which you may buy or hire. I certainly shall not let you have the use of my Boats, unless under *some* conditions, *none* of which

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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which [*sic*] you seemed resolved to submit to. It will save all trouble if you take the offer I have made you, and the sooner it is settled the better.

“EDWARD FITZGERALD.”

But Posh “worn’t a goin’ ta hev his faa’er put oover him, nor he worn’t a goin’ ta take no pledge. Did ye iver hear o’ sich a thing?”

So in due course, on the 17th February, 1874, Mr. W. T. Balls, of Lowestoft, sold by auction the “Lugger *Meum and Twum*” (she had been converted into a dandy-rigged craft about 1872) “and the *Henrietta* by direction of Edward FitzGerald as mortgagee.”

So Mr. Balls writes me. But he has no letters from FitzGerald, and was kind enough to look up the valuation and sale transactions in his books at my request.

The *Meum and Twum* was a favourite of Posh’s and he tried to buy her for himself.



EDWARD FITZGERALD'S GRAVESTONE IN BOULGE CHURCHYARD; AT THE HEAD  
OF THE GRAVE IS A ROSE BUSH RAISED FROM SEED BROUGHT FROM  
OMAR'S TOMB



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## BY ORDER OF THE MORTGAGEE

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But although she had only cost £360 to build in 1867, in 1874 she fetched over £300, and Posh could not go so high as that. So he made other arrangements, and his fishing interests with FitzGerald were finally ended.

One would have thought that there would be no more letters beginning "Dear Posh." But though FitzGerald had found himself obliged to end his association with Posh in the herring fishing, he never ended his friendship, even if, during the last years of his life, he neither saw nor wrote to his former partner.

The *Meum and Tuum* made several more voyages in the North Sea and to the west, and, when she was no longer strictly seaworthy, was sold to a Mr. Crisp, of Beccles, a maltster and general provision merchant, who turned her into a storeship, and anchored her off his wharf in the river Waveney. When she became so rotten as to be unfit even for a storage ship she was

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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broken up, and her name-board was bought by Captain Kerrich, of Geldeston Hall (the son of FitzGerald's favourite sister), who was kind enough to present it to the Omar Khayyám Club. But as the club has no "local habitation"—only a name—it now remains in the charge of Mr. Frederic Hudson, one of the founders of the club.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### UNTO THIS LAST

POSH does not remember the last occasion on which he spoke to his old “guv’nor,” but he says that whenever he did see him he, FitzGerald, would take him by the blue woollen jersey and pinch him, and say, “Oh dear, oh dear, Posh! To think it should ha’ come to this.” Well, this may possibly have been the case. There is no doubt that FitzGerald resumed friendly relations with the fisherman, for on August 29th, 1875, he wrote from Woodbridge to his former partner :—

“WOODBRIDGE, *August 29.*

“DEAR POSH,

“I have posted you a Lowestoft Paper telling you something of the Regatta there. But as you say you like to hear

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EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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from me also, I write to supply what the Paper does not tell: though I wonder you can care to hear of such things in the midst of your Fishing.

"I, and every one else, made sure that the little *Sapphire* would do well when it came on to blow on Thursday: she went to her moorings as none of the others did except the *Red Rover*. But, directly the Gun fired, the *Otter* (an awkward thing) drove down upon, and broke up her Chain-plates, or stenctions [*sic*], to which the wire rigging holds: so she could not sail at all: and the *Red Rover* got the Prize, after going only *two* rounds instead of *three*: which is odd work, I think. Major Leathes' mast went over in the first round, as it did a year ago. At Evening, the *Otter* grounded as she lay by the South Pier: and would have knocked her bottom out had not Ablett Pasifull gone off to her and made them hoist their main-sail.

"Ablett and Jack got more and more un-

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## UNTO THIS LAST

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comfortable with their new Owner, who is a Fool as well as a Screw. At last Ablett told him that he himself and Jack had almost been on the point of leaving him, and *that*, I think, will bring him to his senses, if anything can.

“On Friday we saw *Mushell* coming in deeply laden, and we heard how he had just missed putting three lasts on board of you. I sent off a Telegram to you that same evening, as Mushell knew you would be anxious to know that he had come in safe through the wind and Sea of Thursday night. He was to have started away again on Sunday : but one of his men who had gone home had not returned by one o'clock, when I came away. *This*, I always say, is one of the Dangers of coming home, but, as Things were, *Mushell* could scarce help it, though he had better have gone to Yarmouth to sell his Fish. He seems a good Fellow.

“All these mishaps—I wonder any man can carry on the trade ! I think I would

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EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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rather be in my own little Punt again. But, while you will go on, you know I will stand by you. Your mare is well, and the sore on her Shoulder nearly gone. Mr. and Mrs. Howe send their Regards. Cowell is gone off to Devonshire instead of coming to meet me at Lowestoft: but I dare say I shall run over there again before long.

"Yours always,

"E. FG."

The "little *Sapphire*" I cannot identify. One gentleman has been kind enough to try to help me, and thinks that she was the *Scandal*. But this cannot be so, for the *Scandal* was built for FitzGerald at Wyvenhoe in 1863, was first called the *Shamrock* and then the *Scandal*. Personally, I remember the names of a good many of the yachts of the Norfolk and Suffolk coast of the period, but I can't identify the *Sapphire*. The *Red Rover* was a river craft, a cutter, with the one big jib of our river craft



BOULGE CHURCH

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## UNTO THIS LAST

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instead of jib and foresail, belonging to the late Mr. Sam Nightingale, of Lacon's Brewery. She was originally about twelve tons, but by improvements and additions, when Mr. Nightingale died in the eighties, was eighteen tons. For many years she was the fastest yacht in the Norfolk and Suffolk Yacht Club, and though she was occasionally beaten on fluky days she never lost possession of the challenge cup for long. Fred Baldry, who steered her with extraordinary skill, is, I believe, still alive, and lives on Cobholm Island, Yarmouth.

The *Red Rover* was not only successful on the rivers and Broads, but in the Yarmouth Roads. I was on her when she was beating the famous Thames twenty-tonner *Vanessa*, when the *Red Rover* carried away her bowsprit (a new stick) as she was beating on the sands to dodge the tide, and I remember how we were hooted all the way up Gorleston Harbour when Mr. William Hall's steam launch towed us in.

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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I believe that when the little ten-ton *Buttercup* (unbeaten at her best) came down and gave the poor old *Red Rover* the worst dressing down she had ever experienced it broke Mr. Nightingale's heart. He died soon after, and he left a direction in his will that the *Red Rover* should be broken up and burnt. It would, I think, have been a kinder and better direction to have left the yacht to Fred Baldry, who had steered her to victory so often.

Although I have described her as a river yacht, she was purely a racing machine, and used to be accompanied (in the home waters at all events) by a wherry, with all spare spars and sails, on which everything unnecessary for sailing was stowed before the starting gun was fired.

Once a year she carried a picnic party over Breydon Water, on which occasion, I believe, Mrs. Nightingale was invariably seasick going over to Breydon. Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Nightingale ever used her for



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## UNTO THIS LAST

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pleasure except on that one annual excursion up to Reedham.

Well, well! There are no *Red Rovers* now, and no Fred Baldrys coming on. But there are plenty of stinking black tugs and filthy coal barges embellishing the lovely Norfolk waters. I do not wonder that Colonel Leathes, mentioned in the last quoted letter, has taken his yacht off the public waters and confined her to the beautiful wooded reaches of Fritton Mere.

The *Otter* was a rival of the *Red Rover* in the early days of the latter yacht, and was a clumsy, rather ugly, ketch-rigged craft belonging to Sir Arthur Preston. Major Leathes' (now Colonel Leathes) boat was a yawl named the *Waveney Queen*, and the Colonel tells me that he carried away his mast twice, each time because he would "carry on" too long.

I can't ascertain who was the "new owner" of Ablett Percival and Jack—and if I could I suppose it wouldn't do to name

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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him, in view of FitzGerald's stringent criticism of him. Subsequently Jack Newson went on the *Mars*, the sea-going craft belonging to the late J. J. Colman, M.P., but this was later than 1875.

"Mushell" was the nickname of Joe Butcher, the former skipper of the *Henrietta*, under Posh, as owner.

I must admit that this letter is hard to fit in with the year 1875, when the *Meum* and *Tuum* and the *Henrietta* had been sold, and the separation between Posh and his "guv'nor" final, so far as herring fishing was concerned. The last paragraph, in which FitzGerald writes that so long as Posh goes on he will stand by him, seems in flat contradiction to what happened in 1874. But Colonel Leathes puts the date as 1875, and Dr. Aldis Wright has been kind enough to look up old almanacs in his possession and corroborates this view. It speaks with extraordinary eloquence of FitzGerald's affection for Posh, of his

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## UNTO THIS LAST

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patience with the man, that after the want of recognition of his kindness shown in 1874 he should have written to him in such a manner in 1875.

“Mr. and Mrs. Howe” were, as I have stated before, the caretakers at Little Grange. “Cowell” was, no doubt, Professor Cowell, though it seems strange that FitzGerald should have mentioned him to Posh without any prefix to his name.

That is the last letter in which I can find any reference to Posh, and the last letter in Posh’s possession which was written to him. I dare say there were later letters, but if so they have been destroyed.

FitzGerald had tried a new experiment, and it was ended.

Myself, when young, did eagerly frequent  
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument  
About it and about : but evermore  
Came out by the same door wherein I went.

He had found a new love, a new interest,  
and believed that he had found a new trust-

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## EDWARD FITZGERALD & "POSH"

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worthiness. But he returned through the same door by which he entered ; and he was an old man for disillusionment.

Posh was, no doubt, rude, harsh, overbearing with the old gentleman, but his eyes grow moist now when he speaks of him. I think he would surrender a good deal of his boasted independence if only he could have FitzGerald for his friend again.

The last time he was with me I read him

The Moving Finger writes ; and, having writ,  
Moves on : nor all your Piety nor Wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,  
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

" Well tha'ss a rum un ! " said Posh.

THE END

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